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Defining the Japanese OL Body Through Modern Advice Literature: Text and Images

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Defining the Japanese OL Body Through Modern Advice Literature: Text and Images
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Thesis Abstract

The OL (office lady) is the cultural prototype of the Japanese clerical worker who accounts for the vast majority of women working in white-collar companies after graduating from college until their mid thirties. The OL identity, as a behavior, image, and body is actively shaped and disciplined by Japanese popular culture and corporate culture, yet it is an identity surrounded by cultural tension. This thesis investigates the ways in which the Japanese OL body and identity are shaped and disciplined by Japanese advice literature, namely Mariko Bandō’s book, *The Dignity of a Woman* and *AnAn* magazine. Mariko Bandō’s highly popular book informs Japanese women how to live with grace and dignity befitting ambitious, modern women in the workforce. *AnAn* is a popular young women’s magazine, and I use the text and images to show how these describe the female body and promulgate feminine beauty. Despite their clear differences as advice literature, I show how the OL is both the common reader and the targeted audience of Bandō’s book and *AnAn*. I explore how OL manners and beauty are presented in these two types of advice literature and how they construct OL femininity by urging the cultivation of a desired OL body and identity. This interdisciplinary project involves theorists and studies from visual culture, women’s studies, and sociology to explain how *AnAn* and Bandō’s book discipline the OL as a physical body and gendered identity, products of Japanese society’s “biopower.” I analyze topics such as linguistic silence in Japanese corporate lives, the dichotomy of the OL body as a social and individual concern, and how the OL identity is a “body” capable of empowerment and dissent. I work to ultimately compare which advice literature is the more successful and why it appeals to the sensibilities of the “real” Japanese OL woman.
Table of Contents

Introduction 		 Pages 5-11

**Chapter One:**
A Women’s Magazine Creating Femininity and a Female body 	 Pages 12-35

**Chapter Two:**
The Dignity of an OL 		 Pages 36-57

**Chapter Three:**
Sacrifice and Gratification of the OL 	 Pages 58-79

**Chapter Four:**
Concluding Remarks and Analysis 	 Pages 80-92

List of Works Cited 	 Pages 93-96

*Afterword* 	 Pages 97-98
Introduction

Introducing the OL

The acronym OL is an important and culturally significant marker for the working woman of Japan. The OL stands for the English words ‘office lady,’ and the term indeed identifies women who work in an office. However, the category of women it refers to is more specific, as it designates a kind of woman who is trained and disciplined according to the various rules and regulations of her respective Japanese company. Young women generally enter the workforce and ‘become’ OLs in their early twenties after graduating college, and their identities as OLs may last until their late twenties to mid-thirties. As Rose Carter and Lois Dilatush explain in their chapter, “Office Ladies,” OLs are expected to perform “necessary though usually menial tasks and to add a woman’s touch” to the Japanese (masculine) white-collar company (1976, 86). Moreover, the OL is stereotypically the “junior college graduate [who] will work for three or four years, meet a middle-class salariman [Japanese male office worker] in her company, stop work, and begin the ‘important’ role of raising children and caring for a household” (75).

A successful OL in Japan is not the woman who actively seeks promotion and social mobility in the office nor fights for gender equality in the workplace. Rather, the success of an OL is measured by how well she maintains the harmony of corporate environment, cooperates with her male and female co-workers, and carries out the duties and responsibilities expected of her while intuitively responding to the needs and expectations of the company. OLs may answer phones, clean the desks of their co-workers and superiors, and empty out ashtrays, but these chores must be done, by an OL nonetheless, to ensure the smoothness and success of corporate...
daily procedures. OLs keep the company alive and functioning, and they are indispensable for maintaining key relations within the company as well as with other companies.

However, a woman is not expected to remain an OL for the rest of her life. Normatively, she is hired as an OL with the expectation that she will one day leave the workforce to get married and/or raise a family. This suggests that the OL is a woman with an expiration date, and she is an expendable body in the workforce. Yet, I make the assertion that the OL woman is more than a disposable office worker. She is capable of empowering herself and finding personal happiness within and outside the carefully constructed confines of Japanese corporate hegemony. The OL exists as a highly relevant social and cultural phenomena that merits exploration and careful analysis, and the OL woman, as a body beneath the carefully tailored suit, is a highly disciplined body.

This thesis will explore how the OL is culturally constructed and socially sanctioned. I have chosen to look at how advice literature written for an OL audience informs and disciplines the ‘OL’ body and identity. I began this project with an interest in Japanese women’s written communication and how it functions to educate other women, namely Japan’s OLs as readers. I am intrigued with how the OL stereotype is that of a woman who is an office ‘flower,’ a woman whose responsibility is to be visually delightful and maintain emotional balance within the company. Looking at the OL in this light positions her as an indispensable member of the company. I wondered how the OL could be interpreted as an empowered, gendered cultural icon and a woman who is capable of both dissent and compliance to social and corporate norms. Ultimately, I wanted to explore what forms of empowerment were available to the OL because of her identity as an OL and how the OL may seek personal gratification and success.
I accomplish this task by first looking at Mariko Bandō’s book *The Dignity of a Woman* and *AnAn* as two types of advice literature that shape and perpetuate the ‘OL.’ These two forms of advice literature, albeit different genres, contour and establish the OL identity and body through text and visual representations. In this project I define advice literature to be the written and visual forms of communication produced by women that inform, advise, and altogether discipline the reader. I attempt to show the cultural significance and the extent of how Bandō’s book and *AnAn* as advice literature discipline the female reader. This thesis aims to position readers to understand the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of the OL and ultimately to ‘experience’ the OL. Although I concede that these two types of advice literature are vastly different in terms of style and content, I believe that the connection is in terms of readership. I make the claim that the OL is the common reader of these two types of advice literature.

**Description of primary examples of advice literature**

*AnAn* is a popular women’s magazine produced bi-weekly. I chose *AnAn* as an example of OL advice literature due to the fact that the ‘OL’ and ‘OL culture’ are not explicitly mentioned. However, I was intrigued with how the magazine does strongly insinuate the ‘OL’ and address OL anxieties and consumerist fantasies. *AnAn* is an example of female-authored advice that actively shapes and creates the OL identity and body. *AnAn* provides women with images and text that work towards an active, conscious physical discipline of the body. This kind of discipline becomes a social prerequisite for the OL, and the OL who invests time and energy into this active, physical discipline is feminine and holds the potential to be well-adjusted socially in society and among peers and co-workers in the company. Indeed, *AnAn* directs readers’ attention to the physical flaws on one’s body (the OL body), as it illuminates that a thin,
slender body is ideal and feminine. Yet, solutions to discipline the OL body through garments and exercises are readily at hand for the OL readers.

Mariko Bandō wrote her book, *The Dignity of a Woman (Josei no hinkaku 女性の品格)* with the intention of informing her female readers of the importance of cultivating oneself towards dignity and becoming a respected, valued OL in the company. Although Bandō’s advice is intended for all working women of Japan, she writes for the woman who, like Bandō herself, desires to pursue her career and work professionally. I chose to work with Bandō’s book because I was fascinated by how she encourages her readers to adhere to her ideal of a dignified, corporate ‘superwoman,’ and how this working woman holds the potential to be Japan’s saving grace and a model for all women (of the world). Moreover, I was intrigued by how Bandō posits the typically male-dominated Japanese workforce as the proper setting for Japanese women to prove their capabilities alongside men while maintaining their feminine identities.

I begin this project in Chapter One by discussing looking at how the images in *AnAn* function as forms of visual discipline to goad the OL reader into action through consumerism. In this chapter I explain how *AnAn*, as an example of women’s literary culture, plays a key role in shaping and perpetuating ideals of Japanese OL femininity. Since *AnAn* readership includes the OL age demographic, it appeals to the OL who is a powerful, active consumer and player in the Japanese economy. The OL has expendable income, may be living at home with limited ‘responsibilities,’ and *AnAn* therefore holds a special appeal to the OL reader. This chapter focuses on the various ways in which the images and various products advertised in *AnAn* discipline the OL reader into being a good consumer and disciplining her body into one that is feminine.
Continuing the idea of OL ‘discipline,’ in Chapter Two I explore how Bandō’s ‘dignity’ (hinkaku 品格) functions as a linguistic springboard for the OL to discipline her body according to Bandō’s advice of what qualifies as dignified behavior and feminine comportment. In this chapter I explain how dignity is not simply a social etiquette as it involves a much deeper realm of discipline that involves emotional and psychological control. Bandō explains that women do have an element of control (and an opportunity to express dissent) in the workforce, but a dignified woman learns to discipline her emotions and react to the situation in a graceful manner, for the sake of the harmony of the corporate environment. I look at the various ways in which AnAn stresses adherence to its advice as a necessary social grace and how it advises cultivating feminine values through fastidious attention to hygiene and grooming.

Chapter Three focuses on the ways in which the AnAn advises its OL readers to be good consumers of the products and technology advertised in its editions as a means to achieve happiness and gratification. Moreover, AnAn provides its OL readers with advice towards cultivating romantic and sexual relationships as another means to satisfy OL curiosity. I explore the ways in which Bandō’s advice provides her OL readers with the opportunity to achieve individual gratification and success as OLs. This chapter analyzes the various ‘gray’ areas regarding romance, sexual relations, and fidelity as very likely sacrifices that dignified, ambitious OLs might have to make in order to pursue on-going careers in the workplace. I work to explain how both types ultimately appeal or fail to appeal to the OL reader’s sensibilities. In Chapter Four, I explore which type of advice literature, either Bandō’s or AnAn’s, I consider to be the more successful type of advice in terms of appealing to the sensibilities of the OL readers. I attempt to explain the possible reasons behind this particular literature’s success and popularity among OL readers.
The theoretical approach

To elucidate the significance of the OL as a culturally constructed phenomenon, I refer to Michel Foucault’s discourses on “disciplinary power,” and “biopower” specifically in Chapter One. Using Foucault’s theories as a basis, I explain how Japanese women’s magazines function as advice literature to discipline, inform, and create a socially-supported ‘body’ that fulfills the norms of Japanese state and society. *AnAn* and Bandō exert biopower by creating and perpetuating an ideal of feminine OL beauty and dignified OL comportment. Japanese society inscribes upon the working, Japanese female body a gendered identity--the OL identity. As Chapter One explores, I explain how Japanese OLs who read *AnAn* and Bandō’s advice exert their disciplinary power by choosing to engage with the text and images in each literature, thereby revealing their ability to independently choose possible trajectories and lifestyles.

I reference Judith Butler and her theories about femininity and gender to explore how the OL identity is a ‘feminine’ one and an identity that is socially learned and culturally perpetuated. I take up Butler’s theory that the femininity is a performance, and I extend her theory so that the ‘OL’ is a performance, and a powerful one at that. The OL can either contribute to the success of the company and others in the company, or she can sabotage and disrupt, either intentionally or unintentionally, the harmony (and success) of the workplace. As I explore in Chapter One, Bandō’s advice towards the cultivation of oneself into a dignified, graceful OL is indeed a kind of performance that necessitates a grasp of proper social cues, linguistic expressions, and emotional and psychological discipline. While a woman may shed her title of working as an OL as she progresses through life, the idea of OL femininity and the performance of acting as an OL endures. Bandō, for example, is a good example of how the OL identity and performance are
inseparable—her working title is no longer that of an OL but the manners and discipline that she has acquired over the years working as an OL continue.

Foucault and Butler elucidate that the OL identity is one that is culturally potent and socially charged. Therefore the topic of this thesis is devoted to Japan’s OL to explain how it exists as a phenomena, how advice literature constructs it as an identity, and how advice disciplines the OL female body; the OL in relation to advice literature merits considerable time and attention. Essentially, the OL identity and body is one that is carefully cultivated and disciplined, and through the act of disciplining, one ‘becomes’ an OL. Women’s communication through the textual advice and images presented in Bandō’s book and AnAn play a key role in creating and disciplining the OL identity and body.
Chapter One

A Women’s Magazine Creating Femininity and a Female body

Michel Foucault’s discourses on “biopower” and “disciplinary power” reveal how femininity is a disciplined and controlled identity. As described in Jana Sawicki’s book, *Disciplining Foucault*, “biopower” is the “process through which women’s bodies [are] controlled through a set of discourses and practices governing both the individual’s body and the health, education, and welfare of the population” (1991, 67). Japanese women’s magazines exert biopower by creating and disseminating an ideal of feminine beauty and a female body. By encouraging consumerism and informing women how to improve the sexual attractiveness of their bodies through processes such as hair removal and dieting, Japanese society reveals its expectations for women to assume their biological, procreative role for the sake of the nation.

“Disciplinary power” is a form of biopower that works to “create desires, attach individuals to specific identities, and establish norms” (Sawicki 1991, 68). Unlike biopower, disciplinary power is not defined as repressive and authoritative, but rather a self-initiated power that renders the body more “docile” (83). Disciplinary power is the cultural meanings, expectations, and responsibilities that society inscribes upon the body at the individual level. Feminine bodies as visually portrayed in *AnAn* are bodies that are the products of society’s biopower, and the consistent flow of images of these bodies encourages female readers to create their own docile, feminine bodies and enact disciplinary power to achieve this aim. In Japanese women’s magazines, disciplinary power is a form of empowerment emanating from the female readers to improve their bodies. *AnAn* readers are presented with various products and technologies that promise to render the body more sexually attractive and socially acceptable.
They can follow *AnAn*’s advice and act on it at leisure, adjusting the advice to suit their lifestyles.

The goal of this chapter is to describe the role of advice in women’s magazine literature in actively shaping and creating ‘woman’ as a feminine identity. I have selected six editions of the popular women’s magazine, *AnAn*, as examples of female-authored literature that I categorize as ‘advice literature’ in Japan. I analyze how the advice in these editions of *AnAn* generates a feminine identity and creates a female sexual body through an adherence to the advice regarding clothing, exercise, and health regimens as forms of physical discipline. *AnAn* relies on its female readers to sustain as a magazine in the media world, so it writes for the *AnAn* reader in an authoritative manner that informs the reader of her body flaws and physical weaknesses. I also bring forward the discourse of the gaze as a strong influence in shaping femininity and creating a female sexual awareness, producing female bodies as objects of visual consumption. In other words, the physical regulations and manipulations of the female body in forms such as clothing, exercise, health regimens, and the surveyor’s gaze reveal how femininity in Japan is highly disciplined. The manipulation of one’s body and the adherence to the advice in Japanese women’s magazines reveal that femininity is a gendered, disciplined identity. A disciplined feminine identity and docile body as visually portrayed in *AnAn* are ideal forms of femininity offered to young Japanese women.

Let me begin by explaining the significance of women’s magazines as cultural texts that work to advise and discipline female readers. Women’s magazines produce a female body in the images that have been carefully prepared, photographed, and presented as an ideal feminine form. Inoue Teruko describes Japanese women’s magazines as part of “women’s culture” (cited in Skov and Moeran 1995, 5) that function as a “cornerstone of feminine gender identity in
contemporary Japan—not only as a form of streamlined government propaganda, but as a pervasive presence which cannot be ignored by women making sense of their lives” (Skov and Moeran 1995, 5). Inoue Teruko goes on to explain that the information presented in women’s magazines elucidate the “fundamental truths with no room for questioning” (quoted in Foster 2007, 711). The various products and technologies advertised in AnAn provide female readers with the enticing possibilities for improvement. These echo Foucault’s “technologies” that work towards “mak[ing] women’s bodies even more useful for society’s “multiple shifting needs” (Sawicki 1991, 83). Foucault’s “docile” bodies are those shown in AnAn which constantly remind women of society’s expectations. Women’s magazines that “consistently bombard readers with images of beauty and techniques for beauty making” are representative of the kinds of media biopower that work to discipline a docile body (Foster 2007, 711).

As I will show, AnAn depicts the female body as one that is carefully selected as an ideal form of femininity, and this form of beauty is one that society has chosen as a model for Japanese female readers. These beauty ideals represent an achieved femininity that men and women, as surveyors, can visually consume, critique, and impose as visions of ideal, disciplined femininity on AnAn readers. AnAn is a magazine that caters to young women between the ages of twenty and twenty-five, society’s avid consumers, who “believe in the sugar-coated dreams and glossy images, who […] mirror themselves in the most recent consumer goods” (Skov and Moeran 1995, 60,70). In 1986 AnAn’s popularity surged, with a readership of nearly 650,000 (60). These young female readers not only consume products and AnAn’s advice but also consume and indulge in the images of ideal female bodies as bodies of ideal femininity.

Judith Butler’s analytical approach concerning gender explains the significance of femininity as a culturally and socially learned identity. She aptly describes how femininity is a
not an assumed identity by nature of being born biologically female but rather culture and society work to symbiotically create a feminine identity. Butler asserts that femininity is a “performance” that must be “repeated,” and it is a “mask […] within the presumed heterosexual matrix of desire, [which] produces a desire for a female object” (1999, 72). In other words, femininity is a socially learned behavior that necessitates time and energy; it is a rehearsed identity that is constantly being improved and acted upon so that it yields a feminine identity that can be attached to the biologically female body. The female body is a “sexed body,” one that is biologically sexually capable and one that is socially, culturally, and visually sexualized (175). These encoded meanings are the results of disciplinary power making, creating, and establishing a norm of sexualized femininity.

The first way that I characterize femininity in *AnAn* is the way in which clothing works to discipline a female body and feminine identity. Clothing functions as a kind of physical discipline that tailors and sews in a body beneath society’s fabric. In this way, *AnAn* employs ‘biopower’ by advertising specific female undergarments and clothing that shape and manipulate the female body to its feminine ideal. In the April 2011, No. 1756 edition of *AnAn*, a young woman is photographed wearing the season’s trendy, expensive lingerie in the form of a tight-fitted corset top. ¹ Also in this edition are advertisements of undergarments in the form of bras, shapers, and full-body underwear that work to lift and bring ‘balance’ to a woman’s body. Undergarments and the model’s corset-like top work to show how a feminine body is embodied and disciplined with the help of latex, spandex, and other materials that work to physically manipulate the female body into a “correct feminine posture” (Burns-Ardolino 2003, 49).

Therefore, these garments are the products of Japanese society’s biopower because of the way

¹ Here and elsewhere, footnotes that include Japanese text are titles of spreads from *AnAn* editions unless otherwise noted. 「この美乳と美尻に慣れます」 No. 1756. pg.27
that they constrict the female body into a posture suggests that a free, ‘ungirdled’ female body is
neither feminine nor socially acceptable. This lends credence to the idea that the more
constrictive and uncomfortable the garment is, it is more effective at disciplining a feminine
body. The AnAn reader is advised to sacrifice comfort for the sake of achieving a properly
supported feminine body.

In Figure 1 below, we see how the reader is advised to wear tight latex underpants that
sculpt and support a woman’s lower body. This demonstrates that a Japanese female body
requires the discipline of synthetic materials in order to develop a feminine, attractive body. ²

![Image of underpants](image.jpg)

Figure 1: April 2011, No. 1756. Pg.51

AnAn’s use of the word support in this image is significant because it substantiates the Japanese
obsession with “good proportions” (Spielvogel 2003, 154). Obtaining a proportionate body is not
so much visual as it is scientific and mathematical in Japan. Japanese estute salons often
measure, record, and advise their female patients how to achieve the right proportions and slim
down the erring parts of their bodies based on this ambiguous “mathematical formula” (154).
Furthermore, shaping underwear works to tighten the drooping parts of women’s bodies that
suggest a body that is no longer in its prime and therefore unattractive. In other words, it is not

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² 「3人に2人が効果を実感!!」 No. 1756. pg.51
only one’s duty as an *AnAn* reader and Japanese female consumer to purchase shaping underwear, but there is a sense of urgency to purchase these garments to temporarily stop gravity and biology from adversely affecting the female body. The concept of visually duping and extenuating the image of one’s youth is by no means a notion inherent to Japan. However, it is the frequency and ubiquity in which Japanese women wear these tightening garments that is significant. As Spielvogel explains:

> In the United States, girdles are seldom worn by women in their teens, twenties, or thirties, but in Japan, nearly all women, young and old alike, wear some type of constrictive undergarment to reduce often imagined bulges and lumps. (2003, 166)

Moreover, women’s underwear works as culturally unique garments in Japan that carry erotic implications. Women’s underwear not only render a body that is feminine but also eroticize the female body, as often portrayed in Japanese manga and anime. Male peeping at women’s (most often young girls’) panties in these forms of Japanese popular culture unavoidably brings up implied questions regarding permitted and prohibited male peeping, but it is the way in which these garments visually appeal to the female reader that is worth noting. In Figure 1, *AnAn* assures its readers that the lines of the shaping underwear cannot be seen through clothing. The woman alongside the image wears the underwear, and the pink word bubble rhetorically asks the reader how well her bottom looks-

「お尻がキュット上がって見えませんか？」³. The term *panchira* (パンチラ) in Japanese is a cultural term used to describe an incident of someone looking up a woman’s skirt or catching the sight of a woman’s panties; it is a portmanteau of the English words for panty and quick

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³ Here and elsewhere, Japanese text that appears in brackets at the end of a sentence is text that I am quoting directly from *AnAn* unless otherwise noted.
glance, or *pan* (パン) and *chira* (ちら) in the Katakana syllabary (Galbraith 2009, 185).

However, *panchira* does not merely describe an incident of underwear peeping—we can interpret it to be a way of verbally communicating and even warning a female that her underwear is visible. Figure 1 follows the latter part of this definition, in that it is a way of advising and warning the *AnAn* reader and preventing a potentially embarrassing *panchira* from occurring.

Looking back to Butler’s theory, clothing is a way in which femininity can be reworked and re-evaluated as a gender-specific identity. The special fabric of the tightening undergarments in Figure 1 as well as general outwear fashions displayed in *AnAn* (coats, dresses, etc.) define femininity through emphasizing the female form; clothing is a learned, “gendered performativity” (Burns-Ardolino 2003, 42). These garments “work on the feminine body not only to shape, mold, sculpt, and decorate, thus facilitating the feminine body as an object, [but] these garments also work for the feminine body” (49). In other words, female clothing works to segregate and identify the female body as feminine, just as the “garment frames itself as a signifier of […] a woman who has been habituated into the performatives of gesture, movement, and motility” (49). John Clammer states in his essay “Constructing and Representing the Female Body in Contemporary Japanese Print Media” that the female biological body is “at all times presented through clothing, decoration, and posture in spatial relation to other bodies and is constantly interpreted” (1995, 200). The social and cultural construction of the biologically female body in its media-visual interpretation is constantly changing and adapting to a new definition of a gendered feminine identity.

*AnAn* informs its female readers how to conduct a feminine comportment through the use of their clothing, and this learned awareness is exclusively a sexual one, thus rendering the female body as a sexual identity. *AnAn* provides its female readers with remedies for their body
anxieties. The April 2011, No. 1756 edition of *AnAn* offers a solution, a fashionable bra, for young women who are unhappy with their bust size. In this way, *AnAn* encourages its readers to take up the “performativity of bra wearing, in a move that exhibits the body as a sex object[,] the body becomes sexually enticing as it is prepared as an object of consumption” (Burns-Ardolino 2003, 53). Bras in colorful lace and patterns are not only consumable objects, but they render the female body a sexual one through consumption. Undergarments are not only objects available for consumption, but the female body that adheres to and yields to the confines of these garments is also a body that can be consumed and disciplined. In this way, *AnAn* represents that female clothing and female bodies are sexually charged.

Women learn how to respond to the male surveyor’s gaze and in this process they acquire a sexual awareness. The covers of *AnAn*’s April (No. 1756) and August (No. 1771) 2011 publications display young women who emphasize the erotic focus of the visual tension between skin and the clothed parts of their bodies. Here, John Berger’s theory that the female body is a visually consumed ‘object’ appealing to the male gaze is at work. The two models look directly at the viewer, not with a challenging look but rather with the “expression of a woman responding with calculated charm to the man whom she images looking at her” (Berger 1972, 55). Tousled hair frames their faces and their bodies are carefully posed to “display it to the man [or woman] looking at the picture” (55). According to Berger, although “hair is associated with sexual power [and] passion,” these women are not displaying their “own” sexualities, but rather they are displaying their sexualities to appeal to the surveyor’s “sexuality” (55). Janice Winship claims that a Japanese cover model appeals to the male gaze when she has a “steady, self-contained, calm look of unruffled temper” (cited in Moeran’s 1995 article, 118-9). In Figures 2 and 3 below,

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4 「おしゃカップに憧れる!」 No. 1756 pgs.40-41
we see how these *AnAn* models’ sensual yet collected expressions are ways of offering up their femininity to appeal to the male gaze. Despite the fact that *AnAn* is a women’s magazine, the discourse of the gaze is significant in that it informs female readers how to position one’s body, style one’s hair, and use expressions that would ideally satisfy the male gaze. So, in a sense, the cover models discipline their facial expressions intentionally to entice the male viewers.

![Figure 2: April 2011, No. 1756](image)

![Figure 3: August 2011, No. 1771](image)

Garments create a female body and project a feminine appearance, yet clothing also works to inform women of an implied sexual threat. In response to the male gaze, a woman learns to create a fine line between acceptable, provocative femininity that simultaneously appeals to the (male) gaze and a feminine comportment that requires her to defend her female sexuality. The young woman featured on the cover of *AnAn*’s August issue (No. 1771) wears a short dress and sits casually on a chair, with legs shoulder-width apart, yet her knees are touching and she has her hand resting between her thighs. The sleeves of her dress fall slightly below her  

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5 「ますますキレイになったのは」*No. 1771. pg. 21*
shoulders, she has tousled hair, and she maintains an innocent pout, so it seems reasonable to assume that this image works to appeal to the surveyor’s gaze. However, Sandra Bartky explains that “women tend to sit and stand with legs, feet, and knees close or touching […] as a coded declaration of sexual circumspection […] of a double standard or an effort, albeit unconscious, to guard the genital area” (cited in Burns-Ardolino 2003, 50). Freud’s theory that males are biologically more sexually inclined and more likely to enact sadism seems to offer a possible reason why the surveyed female feels the need to unconsciously protect the sexual parts of her body (cited in Allison 1996, 34). This theory suggests that women are sexually helpless, passive individuals victimized and visually exploited by the sexually aggressive look of the surveying male. It seems logical to assume that this model’s body language is a disciplined, acquired sexual awareness that appeals to the gaze yet emerges out of a socially inscribed need to protect her female sexuality and body.

Although the male surveyor threatens female sexuality, the male gaze in Japanese men’s magazines actually empowers the surveyed female. Anne Allison states that “looking at female body parts is an act, relationship, and construction prominent in many other media and practices in Japan where its meaning is clearly sexual” (30). However, Clammer explains that despite the fact that Japanese men’s magazines certainly do “represent the female body as the object of desire to be consumed visually, [the female body] is not that different from the images portrayed in Japanese women’s magazines” (“Constructing” 1995, 207). Clammer states that two significant things happen in Japanese men’s magazines. The first is that the surveyed female makes eye contact with the surveying male, and it is this female “gaze that makes it clear that there is power which is the woman’s, not the man’s” (208). Second, Japanese men’s magazines often include personal information below images of women, such as their names, hobbies,
favorite foods, etc. (208). Therefore, men’s magazines actually personalize and create an identity for the surveyed female, giving her a sense of autonomy and agency that Japanese women’s magazines in fact do not. The female gaze in men’s magazines meets the male gaze, creating an interesting union; the surveyed female asserts herself not only as an image but as a real person, body, and female identity.

Similar to the autonomy granted to women in men’s magazines, the female gaze in Japanese women’s magazines works to create an empowering visual connection and emotional relationship with the female reader. John Berger (1972) makes the interesting distinction between nakedness and nudity—“To be naked is to be oneself” but “to be nude is to be seen by others” (54). As shown in Figure 4 below, the translated caption for this AnAn front cover of the Oct. 2 1992 edition reads “Beautiful nudity” (referenced in Clammer’s essay “Consuming Bodies” 1995, 198).

![Figure 4: AnAn cover. Oct. 2, 1992](image)

Wearing no clothes, this woman happily runs along a sandy shoreline. Following Berger’s definition, this woman is not naked but nude because she is “seen by others,” namely the AnAn
female reader. According to Anne Allison, “work is being done that examines nonheterosexual forms of gazes or gazing by women as well as the potential for pleasure that not only looking but also being looked at may produce” (1996, 39). Furthermore, Brian Moeran in his essay “Reading Japanese in Katei Gaho” asserts that “women [surveyors] see themselves reflected in an image [of a woman] and this indicates symbolically how women relate to one another through absent men” (118). Therefore, there is a special visual relationship that emerges between the female reader and the surveyed female in Japanese women’s magazines. However, the gaze that a female bestows on another female is not necessarily one that is sexual, but rather it is “a desire to see, to know and to become more like an idealized feminine other, in a context where the difference between the two women is repeatedly re-established” (Stacey 1989, 115). This visual connection is both empowering and didactic for AnAn female readers. The cheerful running woman in this image seems to fit Janice Winship’s idea of the “woman whom the reader can trust as a friend; she looks as one woman to another speaking about what women share: the intimate knowledge of being a Japanese woman” (cited in Moeran 1995, 119). This woman’s gaze meets that of the AnAn reader’s and assures her that she can be comfortable in her own skin, with or without clothes, and she does not need the assurance of the male gaze to feel beautiful.

Moving past garments disciplining a female body, exercise is a form of physical discipline that renders the lean female body as the ideal, feminine form. In 1979 AnAn did not feature words such as “aerobics” or “fitness,” but after three years, these words and visual portrayals of exercise quickly manifested in its publications (Spielvogel 2003, 51). The exercise regimen in the April 2011, No. 1756 publication of AnAn for example devotes four pages to describing a workout regimen and massages that will yield a lean body. The media-generated and socially preferred body ideal is a body that is thin and minimally toned. Therefore, the
Ideally feminine body is not a muscular one, so although it is “frail,” it is socially and aesthetically preferable to a muscular body because it “poses little emotional, intellectual, or sexual threat to the patriarchal status quo” (7). Muscles are viewed with distaste among a great number of Japanese women, especially those who frequent fitness clubs and gyms. These women equate muscles with fat and refuse to do lower body strength training that poses the risk of bulky, muscular legs (171). Although the *AnAn* model performs an exercise routine in the No.1756 publication, there are no advertisements for gyms and fitness clubs. A female fitness instructor in Chiba explains:

> It’s true that fitness clubs don’t advertise in young women’s magazines, like *AnAn*, but you will see many ads for [salons]. This is because young Japanese women have a low fitness consciousness. When they want to shape up, they want to do so quickly and think of salons, not fitness clubs (Spielvogel 2003, 171-2)

Therefore, this paucity of advertisements towards fitness clubs in women’s magazines such as *AnAn* elucidates that Japanese women do not want the physical results of a toned, muscular body that they would acquire in a fitness club. Rather, the workout routines advertised in *AnAn* successfully cater to young women’s desires for a lean body.

However, the lean body for Japanese women seems to contrast with the information in *AnAn* emphasizing a large bust. The slim, non-curvaceous woman is the feminine body ideal that both Japanese society and *AnAn* value, yet this body is one that relies on garments to “create the illusion of breasts” (Burns-Ardolino 2003, 51). This references Butler’s ‘performance’ of femininity through the use of garments, and it also elucidates that the lean female, breasted body relies on external, man-made material to enhance this biological attribute and to create the illusion of breasts. In Figure 5 shown below, *AnAn* informs the reader that the discipline of daily
massage to one’s bust is necessary not only to enhance the appearance and voluptuousness of one’s breast but also for the sake of one’s complexion. In fact, the caption under the massage marked number five asks rhetorically if there is a method that will make one’s bust feel plump - 「バストの質感をふっくらさせる方法ってありますか？」

Figure 5: April 2011, No. 1756. Pg.32

However, it is interesting that modern Japan places an emphasis on the female breast. Prior to the twentieth century, women’s breasts were not regarded as sexual but rather maternal; they signified the nurturing, biological capable aspect of the female body (Miller 2006, 79). Moreover, a lean, flat-chest body was traditionally and aesthetically valued as the body that was best suited for kimono. Lisa Dalby writes that the datemaki, or a sash worn underneath the kimono, was used to help flatten a woman’s chest, so that her body would fit the tubular kimono body ideal (cited in Miller 2006, 79). Dalby explains that the way the obi was tied over a woman’s chest signified a woman’s sexual and marital status—an obi tied high over a her chest signified that she was not married and sexually pure, whereas an obi tied lower, which

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6 「寄せる，上げる，ハリを出す。誰でも美乳になる最短テク！」 No. 1756. pg. 32.
emphasized the shape of her breasts, denoted that a woman was sexually mature (79). Looking back at Figure 1, the girdle underwear in the advertisement is actually a “binding and ubiquitous girdle, [which] should be read as a way to constrain female sexuality” (Spielvogel 2003, 167). In this sense, the intricate ties and wrapping of the kimono is an example of how Japanese traditional clothing functions as biopower agents to contain and subdue the sexual capabilities of women. Despite the fact that a low-tied obi emphasized the bust, the moga of Japan, the modern women of the 1920s, wore their obis high to emphasize their buttocks (149). Here, the moga defied the Japanese body ideal and exerted disciplinary power. Postwar America imported its media-generated erotic fascination of the female breast, and this interpretation has been taken up and disseminated by similar forms of media such as AnAn in modern day Japan. In a country that idolizes youth as a beauty ideal, it seems unusual that Japan would disseminate a body ideal in opposition—there is the dichotomy of the lean, non-threatening, sexually subdued female body and the busty, threatening, and sexually-liberated female body.

Female bodies are not only shaped through physical exercise, but also through the discipline of adhering to a consumerist lifestyle. It is not the rigor of the workout that solely disciplines a feminine identity, but maintaining good consumer practices that yields such an identity. An advertisement in the April publication of AnAn features a body slimmer, a small device with nodes to roll along the sides of one’s body, designed to help slim down one’s waist. The body roller package also includes a vitamin drink that helps speed up the process. This roller and other similar forms of slimming agents work to create a female body that adheres to an “aura of order and management” (Miller 2006, 170). Moreover, the model in the AnAn spread performing exercises wears a pair of the advertised shoes whose extreme flexibility is supposed

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7 「美乳&美尻が映える」No. 1756. pgs. 48-49.
to enhance the fat-burning process.\textsuperscript{8} Clammer states in his essay, “Media and the Construction and Representation of the Body,” a “mirroring body[‘s] medium of expression is consumption” (1997, 128-9). In other words, as the AnAn readers visually consume these images, they work towards creating disciplined and ‘mirrored’ bodies like the ideal “docile” bodies they see in AnAn.

AnAn advertises various technologies and spot slimming treatments that promise to quickly and effortlessly sculpt one’s lower body. Spielvogel explains, “In Japan, far more important than the size of one’s breasts are the shape and slenderness of one’s legs” (2003, 164). Yet, we can understand through AnAn that to have slender legs means having slim ankles, thighs, calves, and hips. To slim down these parts of the female body in order to achieve the shapely legs ideal, AnAn plays on the consumerist fascination with elixir spot treatments and bubun (部分) dieting, or body-part dieting (160). Bubun dieting is a process of isolating and targeting one’s ‘problem areas’ on the body and purchasing the necessary slim-down products to fix such problems. However, what is most interesting about bubun dieting is the way in which the products are marketed towards the AnAn readers--the young, busy working university students or career women (OL) of Japan. AnAn advertises that these spot treatments do not require much time or physical effort, and they can be used as often or as little as one likes depending on one’s schedule. In Figure 6 below, the advertisement features pants and stockings that do the similar job to those of the shaping underwear in Figure 1—these lower body garments synthetically constrict and visually slim down the body. However, the two pairs of pants in the upper part of this advertisement claim to use special synthetics (power net パワーネート) that work to tighten up the hip and calf areas of the female body. In the lower portion, the pink stockings also slim

\textsuperscript{8} 「歩くのが楽しくなる」No. 1756. pg. 50.
down the appearance of one’s legs, yet the text accompanying the image claims that the consumer can obtain a “Slimwalk” and a “long type” 『ロングタイプ』 body, one that she has only dreamed about 『夢みるここちの』. 『AnAn』 explains to its readers how effortless it is to achieve the appearance of slim legs, by simply wearing the stockings or pants. The discipline in achieving the shapely legs ideal is not through the labor of a physical regimen but rather through the discipline of consuming the necessary slimming products.

In much the same way that consumerism works to discipline the female lower body, female hair removal as described in 『AnAn』 is portrayed as a necessary hygienic practice that is achieved through the disciplined consumption of technologies and products. 『AnAn』 explicitly emphasizes that hair removal is a woman’s responsibility. Therefore, the natural, hairy female
body is one that holds the potential to be socially offensive, and as Figure 7 below illustrates, women who do not take care of this responsibility are considered at risk for social and emotional humiliation. As Laura Miller (2006) explains, Japan’s very active “hair anxiety” (*kegirai* 毛嫌い) is a grounded historical notion that was employed to identify and segregate (hairy) individuals of different racial and ethnic backgrounds (103). As shown in *AnAn*, Japan’s “hair anxiety” works in a similar way to distinguish and ridicule women—those who are feminine and socially responsible and those who are not. Images like the one below illuminate Japan’s “hair anxiety,” and it comically illustrates the perils of what happen if a woman shirks her responsibility.

![Figure 7: April 2011, No. 1756. Pg. 114](image)

The cartoon in Figure 7 illustrates two female characters who are the victims of repulsed, disapproving male stares. In the left portion of this image we are presented with a magnified view of the woman’s hairy legs, and in the right we see the man’s physical repulsion and horror once he discovers her hairy upper lip as she leans in for a kiss; he even remarks that she has a beard - 「ヒゲ？！」. It is interesting that *AnAn* reveals its “hair anxiety” through an

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9 「おうちでもできる!」No. 1756. pg.114)
illustration that was drawn from the male’s perspective. However, Japanese advertisements in women’s magazines, are used as “rhetorical devices meant to repel the consumer and goad her into action” (Miller 2006, 106). In order to avoid similar unfortunate situations, AnAn informs its readers of the necessary products and technologies such as waxing, tweezing, electrolysis, etc. available and illustrates that female hair removal is a social imperative.

Similar to the hygienic responsibilities of women in Japan, the feminine body also needs to maintain a healthy, feminine, genki (元気) spirit. A feminine spirit in Japan is one that encompasses both the physical aspects as well as the emotional aspects. Linguistically, genki is not only a medical, physical health but also a mental, emotional, and social well-being. Spielvogel describes that to be genki in Japan is to be “well-adjusted, enthusiastic, self-sufficient, and passionate” (2003, 22). Unlike the West, Japan fuses the notions of the self, body, and soul as intricate and inseparable identities (Clammer 1995, 208). Furthermore, the Japanese notion of kata (型) or katachi (形) can be understood as a means of achieving a genki, feminine spirit. Kata is culturally situated in Japan as a learning process that requires observation and the physical discipline of one’s body in an effort to make the action almost “second nature” (Bardsley, Miller 2001, 9). Takie Lebra explains that kata can be interpreted as “femininity training,” the learned efforts of feminine behavior, speech, and appearance (cited in Bardsley, Miller 2001, 8). Moreover, to be genki is more than simply taking care of one’s body, it is a way of living with a sense of moralistic virtue, responsibility, and awareness. In the April 2010 AnAn special edition, an article about how to cope with dizziness (めまい) shows a cartoon image of a woman who relaxes in the bath. The text below in Figure 8 reads that when a woman is stressed, she should take some time to herself to rejuvenate her ‘genki’ body and spirit.  

10 「めまい」 Special Edition. Pg. 50.
In this image, we see how leisure is intertwined with a *genki*, feminine spirit, as Spielvogel denotes that health is “inseparable from the notion of a balanced modern lifestyle which stresses equal doses of leisure and labor” (2003, 22). Maintaining a physically healthy body is a “sense of spiritual Japaneseess,” and it is the “essence of Japanese womanhood” (Clammer 1995, 212). Taking care of one’s body and cultivating a *genki* spirit, body, and mind are none other than moral imperatives for Japanese women.

Furthermore, *AnAn* advises readers to discipline their daily food intake as part of a feminine lifestyle. Just as *bubun* consumerism works to sculpt and create shapely legs, dieting in Japan targets problem areas by using the “‘divide and conquer’ notion” (Spielvogel 2003, 158). Moriyama Nachiko, a Japanese eating disorder therapist, equates dieting in Japan to a kind of “female entertainment” and “hobby” (cited in Miller 2006, 168). Moriyama explains the popularity of dieting in Japan because it presents itself as an equal opportunity for all women to become thin, the “rules” are easy to follow, it is not a financial burden, and it is an individual activity (168-171). Figure 9 below describes a fad diet called the Green Smoothie - 「グリーンスムージーDiet」. It is just one of the fad diets in this edition that promises to help
The AnAn reader lose 2.5 kg in 10 days. As shown in the image, the diet explains its “rules” for the keys to success, listing the appropriate green foods and quantities as such that one should blend together. According to Miller, “the work of dieting is socially rewarded regardless of the results […] because it demonstrates that the dieter is at least making an effort at self-improvement” (2006, 172). In other words, the discipline of food intake is a kind of social expectation for women in other aspects of their lives. Dieting can be understood as a woman’s self-initiated desire since reference to the male gaze and inclusion of the male presence (in pictures and illustrations) is not often present in the dieting sections in women’s magazines (174). Miller suggests that dieting is “beyond a simple longing to attract men […] perhaps fasting and dieting are ways to exert control without challenging male power” (175). Moreover, Spielvogel explains that dieting is “not simply a quest for beauty, but an active struggle over notions of selfhood, identity, and power” (2003, 186).
Yet, despite the regimens of fad diets and *bubun* dieting, *AnAn* details a lifestyle that permits occasional, feminine indulgence. Generally speaking, “Exercising control over appetite becomes a way to simultaneously reflect notions of beauty [and] femininity in contemporary Japan,” (Speilvogel 2003, 175) and it becomes a “very public endeavor” (Miller 2006, 171). However, in *AnAn*’s April publication, the model Hasegawa Jun is shown enjoying a bite of a Hawaiian sweet, Malasadas. It is interesting that *AnAn* chose a lean, internationally known model for this spread. Hasegawa’s model body epitomizes Japan’s ideals of beauty with her long legs and lean figure, yet the image of her indulging in sweets can be interpreted as a convincing image to *AnAn* women who realize that it is alright to occasionally indulge. According to Spielvogel, “[i]n Japan, enjoying sugary cakes and snacks is viewed as a decidedly feminine trait […] constructed as cute and childishly attractive” (2003, 181). There is a fine line distinguishing a disciplined consumption of food and a feminine indulgence of confectionary sweets. “Indulgence, like dieting, is a way to claim identity and manipulate power […] and it is this contradiction between self-denial and self-indulgence” that elucidates *AnAn* and Japanese society’s expectations for Japanese women to diet yet occasionally indulge (181, 186).

Young female readers, however, are presented with an interesting dichotomy of maintaining a lean figure and one that is fit for motherhood. *AnAn* implicitly presents a chronology of events that reflect Japan’s national sentiment and expectations—women are to improve their bodies in an effort to achieve femininity, use this learned sexuality to attract a mate, and eventually produce offspring. This is exemplified in the October 2011 (No. 1780) publication of *AnAn* which features a visibly pregnant young woman on the cover, who delicately covers her breasts with her hands. As shown below in Figure 10, this online

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11 「上を向いて笑おう」 No. 1756. pg. 68.
advertisement for this edition relays an explicit message. We see two packs of birth control pills, and this reveals that it is important to discipline the natural processes of the female body in order to time and ‘discipline’ childbirth. The ability to prevent biological processes is a form of empowerment that reflects a woman’s disciplinary power. However, AnAn explicitly conveys the idea that childbirth is imminent because it says that the year 2011 is the ‘baby boom’ - 「ベビーブームが来た 2011年」.

In Figure 10, there seems to be an obvious shift in focus from that AnAn fashion to that of advising young female readers in child-bearing. This particular AnAn publication focuses on the female body as a body that is sexual, yet biologically capable (and socially responsible) for reproduction. Spielvogel explains that “there is little tolerance in Japan for those who do not contribute to the hegemonic demands of production and reproduction” (2003, 198). Therefore AnAn’s media-produced biopower has set a “normative femininity” in favor of a lean female body and an emphasis on “appearance” over a “maternal body” (Sawicki 1991, 89). This publication seems to stand in contrast to the norm of female sexuality and feminine behavior; no longer is the AnAn reader at leisure to exercise and occasionally indulge in sweets, she has a biological responsibility to procreate and essentially, a national responsibility to Japan. AnAn
implies to the reader that its advice and information about childbirth, healthy pregnancy, and birth control all serve to discipline a woman’s body not only for one pregnancy but also for subsequent pregnancies.

Femininity in Japan is not an inherent trait; it is learned socially, culturally, and visually. The text and images in AnAn function as agents of biopower that advise Japanese women how to achieve the ideal femininity through disciplining their bodies. Exercise, consumerism, and dieting represent the intricate relationship between society and AnAn enforcing its biopower and the individual AnAn reader acting upon her disciplinary power and creating a docile, feminine body. However, these images are only flat, 2D images. Although they may represent society’s ideals of femininity and female bodies, it is not a guarantee that Japanese women will consume and act upon the advice presented in AnAn. Spielvogel laments that Japanese society enforces an ideal of beauty that is an “unobtainable combination of wholesomeness, youth, sex appeal, cuteness, and thinness” (2003, 6). There is a symbiotic, complex relationship between Japanese consumers and advertisers that creates an interesting sociology of what it means to be feminine and beautiful in Japan. “Advertisers proceed to place actual women readers in a secondary position as cross-readers, who can leaf through their magazine pages with a thrill at seeing such a grotesque masquerade of Japanese femininity” (Skov & Moeran 1995, 69). Images in AnAn present women with only one possible form and interpretation of Japanese femininity, but it is ultimately up to the AnAn reader to discipline her body and achieve the form of femininity that she so desires.
Chapter Two
The Dignity of an OL

How does an OL communicate with her boss, optimistically manage her clerical work and receive promotions? Mariko Bandō understands the emotional frustrations and social anxieties that complicate work life for Japan’s office ladies (OLs). Bandō, we have to assume, first began in the Japanese workforce as an office worker herself. However, she worked passionately to hold a professional career, gain respect among male colleagues, and serve as a model for Japanese female workers. In 1969 Bandō was the first woman bureaucrat appointed to work for the prime minister and she held this position for thirty-four years (Kawaguchi 2010, 1). Twenty-six years later Bandō served as the vice governor of Saitama prefecture and in 1998 she became the first woman to serve as consul general of Japan in Brisbane, Australia (1). From 2001 to 2003 Bandō was appointed the director-general of the Bureau for General Equality, and she currently holds the position as president of Showa Women’s university. Bandō represents a unique kind of woman, an office-worker turned high-profile civil servant, and she demonstrates that women can indeed become distinguished professionals and successfully invade male spheres of public service.

Bandō’s book, The Dignity of a Woman (Josei no hinkaku 女性の品格), became a best seller in 2006. It sold nearly three million copies and even garnered international attention (Onishi 2008, 1). The Dignity of a Woman reads as if it were semi-autobiographical, as Bandō often incorporates anecdotes and lessons learned from years of experience in pervasively male
sectors of work. Although Bandō writes optimistically as an encouraging mentor, eager to pass down her advice to female readers, she does not overlook the kinds of behavior and qualities that qualify as equally undignified behavior. The occasional chiding commentary refers to women who refuse to be aware of the needs of others, do not take pride in their appearance nor actively contribute to the success of the company or work to garner respect and appreciation from male co-workers. Conversely, Bandō’s dignified woman is very conscious of the way men perceive her as a female presence, and she works to shatter the illusion that women are unmotivated, uninterested space-fillers in the office, solely capable of and responsible for menial tasks and household-like duties in the company.

Bandō believes that the advice in her book holds the key for Japan’s OLs to find personal fulfillment in their public and private lives. Bandō’s slim volume reads like a ‘how to’ manual for Japan’s OLs, and it coaches them in ways designed to lead them out of subordinate positions. Each of the seven chapters outline proper behavior and attitudes that distinguish dignified women. Chapters explaining the significance of dressing appropriately, properly using the polite forms of speech, and establishing friendly relationships with co-workers and friends are examples of the broad topics Bandō brings forward. She breaks down each chapter into smaller, more specific sections that advise women how dignity directly pertains to various aspects of OL lifestyles. For instance, in her sixth chapter, “Respectable Behavior,” Bandō explains the importance of punctuality and producing quality work even if one is not held to any deadline or expectations. Working towards dignity is a behavior, mindset, and overall discipline that cannot be achieved overnight; it is a lifetime effort and a constant strive towards self-cultivation and improvement.
Defining the OL

As I previously stated, Bandō writes as a working woman for the sake of other working women, namely the office ladies (OLs) of Japan. While that this assertion may seem to unfairly lump all Japanese working women into the OL category, I contend that the OL is indeed the pervasive, dominant image and prototype of the Japanese working female (Raz 2002, 180-1). The OL is a culturally sanctioned if not culturally anticipated role for the majority of young women to do at some point in their lives. The Office Ladies as the primary readers of Bandō’s advice manual are young females, either in their late teens or early to mid twenties, who perform clerical tasks and other menial duties required of them as part of their subordinate position to male superiors in white-collar companies. OLs are normally hired with the understanding that they do not seek company promotion, therefore posing no threat to male members of the company. The OL is culturally understood to be a demographic of women who work for a few years and quit prior to marriage or starting a family; the OL identity is intended by society to be a transient identity. However, in an interview with Bandō, Bandō reveals her plea for women to keep their jobs even after they marry:

No matter what happens or how nice your husband may be, keep your job! In the 20th century, most Japanese women, unfortunately, quit their jobs after they got married or had children. So much talent and possibility was lost. (Kawaguchi 2010, 2)

Bandō’s advice therefore seems to challenge normative OL expectations. A likely explanation for this incongruity is that Bandō belongs to what Sumiko Iwao (1993) calls the “first postwar generation.” Bandō was born in 1946, one year after Japan’s surrender, and she and other
“postwar” women were raised when the “ideal of sexual equality, as opposed to the traditional pattern, was emphasized, especially in the schools” (20). As Bandō (2008) explains in Kawaguchi’s interview:

I never felt inferior to men. At school I knew the answers as well as any boy, so I grew up thinking that women and men had the same potential (2).

Even in the preface of her book *The Dignity of a Woman*, Bandō explains that Japanese working women are indeed equal to men, yet dignified women should not aim “to outdo men in the pursuit of promotions or authority, but pursuing dignity as human beings” (3). Bandō and other women of the first postwar generation “quickly realized that the roles of wife and mother alone were not sufficiently satisfying [and] began to question and attempt to define their roles” (Iwao 1993, 21). Iwao goes on to explain that women of this generation “differ from those of the previous one in that they are better prepared to articulate their doubts about the status quo to husbands or society in general” (21).

Bandō, although she claims that she writes for the benefit of all women, caters more towards working women on the “integrated” career path. The “integrated” path, as explained by Iwao, is the competitive career path that women follow in order to be considered in line for promotion (1993,179). The work these women do most nearly resembles the work and responsibilities of male co-workers, including overtime. Conversely, the “general” employment track is the normative expression of OL work, the “less demanding” jobs typically held by women where there is no possibility for promotion or tasks with great responsibilities. As previously mentioned, Bandō is a member of the first postwar generation, and women of this generation often came back to the workforce as “returnees” after marriage and time spent participating in home and family life (171). Like Bandō, these women continue their work for
many years with a renewed, valuable insight, a special “know-how for dealing appropriately and quickly with all manners of situations […] they] are a gold mine for the labor market” (172).

Bandō’s ideal, dignified OL is a particularly ambitious woman, an “integrated” returnee to the workforce. Yet this woman is perhaps too ambitious, futuristic, and not grounded in reality. Bandō does not take into account other OL’s personal motivations, goals, and routes to achieve individual fulfillment and gratification. What Bandō leaves out are reasons why Japanese women may prefer general work to the integrative career path. In other words, work for some women is a choice, not a life-long goal, and women can make the decision how largely they want their work lives to be a central part of their lives. For example, women on the “general” track prefer the low-key work expected of them because they only want work to be a fraction of what “they consider important in life, and so the general track does not necessarily seem inferior” (183).

These women desire personal time, and they are not willing to sacrifice their health for the sake of the company (165). Although Bandō writes with the intention to encourage all Japanese women to work towards living a life imbued with dignity, her advice may only be actively pursued and taken up by uniquely ambitious, promotion-seeking women, like Bandō herself.

This chapter focuses on the OL as a body that is capable of both dissent and conforming to cultural and social norms of the Japanese workplace. The OL is not a passive body in the workforce, but she is pragmatic and active in the workforce, in all her duties in the workforce. The OL is also capable of disrupting the social harmony of the company, although the consequences for such an upheaval are by no means insignificant. Bandō’s dignity functions as a key word in constructing a unique kind of OL physical consciousness and discipline. In much the same way that AnAn’s advice physically disciplines and informs the female body, Bandō’s dignity disciplines the OL body on deeper levels—it is not just a physical discipline but also a
psychological and emotional obedience. Bandō writes to inform Japanese women of the realities of the workplace, not to encourage women to challenge gender stereotypes. Bandō uses dignity (hinkaku 品格) as the keyword to encourage Japanese women to discipline their behavior, appearance, and emotions in hopes of becoming dignified, graceful women. Bandō’s dignity functions as a linguistic guise to validate her writing as a female author and her viewpoint as female professional, conscientiously working not to overstep or challenge boundaries of gender.

As Bandō (2008) explains in her preface:

_The Dignity of a Woman_ was written out of a desire to convey to young women the wisdom I have obtained after struggling with my own doubts and finding solutions by trial and error over a long period in the professional world. (1)

Bandō hopes that her experiences in overcoming gender-related barriers in the workforce will encourage Japan’s OLs to move past such obstacles and work towards assuming positions of authority and responsibility in the company.

Bandō’s keyword dignity was not chosen unconsciously. Dignity, translated as _hinkaku_ (品格), is a word that occurs in modern Japanese that signifies one’s individual rights used in modern Japanese. The older, Japanese-conceived concept of dignity, _jinkaku_ (人格), did not refer to an individual’s rights, but denoted social hierarchy (Inoue 2001, 1-3). The prefix of jinkaku, _jin_ (人), means person or individual, and the suffix _kaku_ (格) means quality or class. _Jinkaku_ conveys a sense of social and political elitism, and its Confucian roots grounds the term in a web of social obligations, familial responsibilities. Most fundamentally it serves as a reflection of one’s character and moral righteousness. The term dignity gained special prominence when the Japanese mathematician Fujiwara Masahiko used the term _hinkaku_ in the 2005 publication of his book, _The Dignity of the Nation_ (Kokka no hinkaku 国家の品格). Although the character and
meaning of the suffix (kaku) remain the same as its jinkaku counterpart, the prefix, hin (ѯ), refers to the quality of goods and merchandise. In other words, hinkaku was culturally and linguistically revived to refer to a more concrete, physical identity, one that is intricately connected to the quality of consumption of goods or knowledge. This suggests that dignity is no longer a process of self-cultivation or reflection of one’s moral nature, but rather that one can achieve dignity through external means; there is an elitist nuance and exclusivity imbedded in hinkaku.

Feminizing hinkaku in Bandō’s advice

Bandō’s hinkaku echoes the elitist sentiment of Fujiwara’s hinkaku. Bandō explains that it is dignified to know the names of flowers and trees that are particular to seasons, an ancient cultural tradition. She laments that Japanese men and women do not know the names of various kinds of nature as described in the poetry of Man’yoshu and Kokinshu and in Heian classics such as The Tale of Genji and The Pillow Book (Bandō 2008, 100). Women who take part in ancient traditions such as tea ceremony or ikebana, flower arrangement, and those who know the cultural history of colors and their relation to nature (i.e. hiwada iro- the color of Japanese cypress bark) possess a “charm of great depth,” and this is an indicator of one’s dignity (101). Here, this traditional knowledge echoes the aesthetic awareness and emotional sentiment that Fujiwara describes in The Dignity of the Nation, and Bandō’s nuance of dignity seems to cross over from one that is inclusive and universal to all Japanese women to a meaning that conveys elitism. Bandō encourages and expects women to read ancient classics and poems to become cultured, knowledgeable women, although she does not elaborate how this knowledge is relevant or a prerequisite for success in the workforce.
Bandō explains that Japanese working women have much to learn from the outside world, and they should cultivate an international awareness that will render them a greater sense of dignity. Unlike the disdain for globalization and cultural ‘homogenization’ that Fujiwara describes, Bandō (2008) encourages women to widen their social circle of exposure, explaining that women must take the first step and move beyond their social circle and mingle with other women, both Japanese and foreign (18). She says that despite the sense of security and comradery that a tight-knit social circle promises, it is socially and emotionally “suffocating” and does not provide women with the “opportunity to cultivate poise” (118). Dignified women travel, and it is important to gain a cultural understanding and awareness of foreign cultures and people in order to widen one’s exposure and for the sake of networking. Bandō explains how her foreign travels to Australia and America taught her the importance of following through with appointments and writing thank-you notes after interviews and meetings. Observing the chic Parisian women, Bandō understood the elegance and ‘smartness’ of maintaining a confident, feminine posture. Bandō explains to her readers, “It is difficult to judge a person’s inner poise. In such cases, not only what one is wearing but one’s attitude and bearing have a major impact” (74). A dignified woman is an aware global citizen, willing to pick up the feminine, dignified manners of the world for self-cultivation.

Not only does Bandō borrow the term *hinkaku* and ‘feminize’ it to appeal to a female audience, she ‘feminizes’ the idea of (Western) logic by favoring a pragmatic approach. Sumiko Iwao (1993) explains in her book, *The Japanese Woman*, that the “value system that guides Japanese women is reactive” and dependent on the social environment and one’s emotional reception of the situation; it is subjective yet grounded in sensitivity and emotional “pragmatism” (8). Unlike American women, who are raised to value and act upon “principles” grounded in
“logic,” Japanese women are not given the opportunity to make independent decisions at an early age but are raised to think of maintaining the harmony of the social unit, namely the harmony of the family (9). Although Iwao explains that women are being “awakened to the options” of being more “active” in designing their lifestyles and careers, she laments that it is nearly impossible for Japanese women to “completely shed their characteristic passivity and resignation to their fate” (10). Bandō describes in her USJP Working Paper, “A Comparison of Women Executives in Japan and the United States,” that the Japanese workforce needs to make greater efforts to satisfy “women’s needs economically and socially, expanding their participating in decision-making in Japan […] which will] creat[e] more chances to demonstrat[e] women’s abilities and remov[e] prejudice against them” (2007,1). Bandō desires for women to achieve two things: to avoid conflict with co-workers yet showcase one’s potential and abilities. In her section explaining how to maintain “courteous human relations” Bandō advises women to avoid showing anger towards co-workers, because if she does she is at risk of being “dogged by a bad reputation” (Bandō 2008, 124). Instead, she advises women to control their feelings of frustration:

True anger, rather than being allowed to burst forth in an explosion, is something you should consider first, then decide when, where, and how to express it most effectively […]. (125)

**Dignified OLs discipline emotions**

Bandō encourages women to respond to displeasing environments in a way that is dignified and pragmatic, successfully evading conflict and simultaneously protecting her reputation. In other words, a woman shows her strength by responding to difficult situations in a calm, even-tempered manner by thinking and responding appropriately to the situation;
pragmatism is a way of thinking about *others* and simultaneously protecting one’s dignity and reputation.

Bandō’s dignified women actively learn from and listen to male co-workers. Dignified women, Bandō explains, should act upon their ability to realize the strong and weak points of their character and work towards self-cultivation; achieving dignity is a constant, dynamic process of change and self-improvement. Realizing the need for improvement and the need to “develop certain qualities” are necessary traits that modern, dignified women must learn to succeed in a global society, yet these are the characteristics that all women possess by “virtue of being women” (Hirakawa 2011, 141). As Aviad Raz explains in his book, *Emotions at Work*, ‘emotion’ in the Japanese workplace functions “not only as social glue but also as signals and mediators of social conflict” (2002, 43). Raz’s definition of Japanese emotion in the workplace appears to run parallel to Iwao’s ‘pragmatic’ approach for responding to and evaluating others’ emotions. Bandō’s dignified women know how to talk and listen to male subordinates and superiors, and as she explains in an interview, she encourages patience when co-workers relay instructions:

Subordinates, especially women, must educate their bosses. Even today, few [male] bosses know how to handle women workers. Men have their own understanding of the way a company system operates, but women usually need more verbal communication [in understanding how a company system operates]. If a woman wants to grow, she must teach her bosses how to talk to her in a way that she understands. One should never assume that others know what one means.

(Kawaguchi 2010, 2).
Here, Bandō suggests two things: first, women function more efficiently when they are given explicit instructions; and secondly, that women have a special kind of superiority over their male co-workers. A dignified woman has a responsibility to “teach” her employers how to relay information to her in a way that she can understand. Yet, Bandō’s dignified women also have an important obligation to listen to their co-workers, and she promises in her fifth chapter that this will promote a greater understanding and trust between a female worker and her co-workers:

What is called ‘directed listening’ refers not to letting something go in one ear and out the other […] but to listening with both ear and heart, listening with the speaker as the focus. That means neither criticizing nor judging the other but merely listening single-mindedly. (Bandō 2008, 136-137)

The Private and Public OL

Bandō advises OLs to discipline personal emotions, and this discipline renders the idea that OL dignity is a performance. Indeed, becoming a dignified OL requires rigorous discipline of the body. Raz’s idea of “bodily habitus” explains how the OL, more than an individual, functions as a ‘body’ in the workforce, adhering to carefully crafted behavioral norms. Therefore, the OL body, construed as an “interface between the internal (private) and the external (public), must be closely managed,” and is through her “body, not the person, [that] is the locus of socialization” (Raz 2002, 188). An OL is required to suppress personal emotions and adhere to the socially prescribed and accepted “workplace emotions” which unite the “private with the public and the authentic with the masked” (1). This is not to say that OLs do not experience real, human emotions in the workplace such as frustration, sadness, etc. but they are expected to adhere to the “collective emotionality” of the workplace and manage their emotions accordingly
(3). Essentially, the OL emotional experience is limited yet responsive to the collective consciousness of co-workers.

Naturally, suppressing emotions holds the potential to commercialize and standardize human emotion, leaving the OL body an empty shell and the OL as an individual one that is emotionally dissonant and a “false self” (Raz 2002,49). As Raz claims, and Bandô demonstrates, one of the ways in which Japanese companies manage OL emotion is through the appearance of cheerfulness and an enthusiasm for taking charge of the task at hand, namely OL “smile training” (9). A smile is an easily replicated, universal expression to indicate the ‘real’ emotion of happiness, yet this physical gesture is managed and reproduced to indicate the success of the company’s discipline and control of (OL/female) emotion. Dignified women, Bandô explains, must be adept at handling every task, even menial ones, with alacrity and a positive attitude, and this will ultimately allow her to better herself as a contributing member of society and human being:

Consider how you might make [paper] copies clearer and faster by making use of the functions of the copy machine. If you have curiosity and a desire to improve yourself, work will become easier. If your way of thinking turns positive, then the unpleasant and irritating parts of your job will decrease. […] To do this, you should avoid complaining and make assiduous efforts even when no one happens to be watching […] this will elevate your dignity as a human being. (2008, 154-5)

The apparent alertness of OLs is a way to measure the degree of success in the management of emotion in Japanese companies and affirming the success of the company’s “expression” and “social glue” (Raz 2002, 10). The OL smile and cheerful attentiveness signify that Bandô permits and encourages OL dignity as a necessary performance to simultaneously protect one’s
reputation as a seemingly hard-working, successful OL in the office and cultivate oneself as an honest, dignified human being.

Bandō’s dignified OLs must not only learn to manage their workplace emotions, but they must work towards self-cultivating a moral, dignified inner self and upright moral character. The concept of *kata* (型) or *katachi* (形) is the Japanese-contrived concept of uniting the spirit and mind, a distinct form of self-cultivation and discipline that “redefines the internal, the spirit” (Raz 2002, 161). *Katachi* is a “performative rule” that utilizes emotion as the impetus for change yet simultaneously merges outer and inner behavior, the “public and private” (191). Achieving Bandō’s idea of OL dignity is a lifetime effort, and in relation to the emotional and physical discipline required of *katachi*, Bandō’s dignity is a unique “concept of character” that “occupies a central role in the social world of the office” (166). Bandō’s chapters of advice not only inform women of ‘what it takes’ to become dignified OLs, they serve as a kind of “spiritual education” (to borrow Thomas Rohlen’s term) to cultivate “stronger [individual] character and respect for social requirements” (Raz 2002, 173). In other words, following Bandō’s advice is more than a means to an end (cultivating dignity); dignity as “spiritual education” goes beyond the OL performance into a deeper realm, the consciousness and morality of the OL. Raz explains, “a neat appearance is an index of [one’s] perfected self, and everything [one] does is inevitably reflected in the behavior and responses of others” (2002,178). Hochschild’s theories about “deep play,” the real emotions an OL may experience at work, and “surface play,” the social prescripts and behavioral expectations, are those that Bandō deem necessary for dignified OLs (cited in Raz 2002, 185). However, the OL experience neither includes “deep play” nor “surface play,” since the OL “performance is ideally both surface and depth, since it is supposed to reflect one’s
true (not false) character” (184-5). Managing emotions, Bandō advises, is necessary not only to emotionally succeed in the workplace but to cultivate oneself as a dignified human being.

Harmony within the company and among co-workers takes precedence over ‘real’ emotions that OLs may experience in the workplace. As previously explained, OLs are not only expected to manage their ‘real’ emotions, they are professionally obligated to tend to the wellbeing of the larger social unit, the company. As Raz succinctly states, “the company takes the form of a family” (2002,19). Once women are hired with Japanese companies, they are contracted to treat members of the company as if they have familial relations. However, the irony is that the emotions that women may have expressed openly among their family would not be tolerated in the company. This would be a broach upon professionalism and mar one’s character, suggesting a woman’s emotional instability and reckless nature, potential hazards for the company. The cultural significance of the Japanese traditional home, ie (家), denotes a woman’s responsibility and obligation to manage both the family and home. The ie is “both an enterprise/work organization and a domestic unit of kinship […] an inseparable” relationship between the home and family (19). To the extent that the ie represents social cohesion and emotional loyalty today’s OLs are expected to maintain harmonious relationships and avoid conflict in both the family and workplace. Bandō encourages women who feel inundated with work to seek out help from others and devise a game plan. She suggests that if the overwhelmed OL were to ask subordinates to pitch in, or if need be, (kindly) ask her superior to hire more employees, the process would not only be more effective but she would be able to build strong interpersonal relationships with her co-workers (Bandō 2006, 159-162). Although Bandō never explicitly compares the workplace to a family unit, she does suggest that OLs should from time
to time compare the work required of them in the home with the work required of them in the company, and balance accordingly:

Consider the circumstances of your own work and your family, your stamina and ability, and then restrict yourself to taking on two or maybe three positions at any one time.

(2008,164)

**Dignified OLs respond in a dignified manner**

Dignified women must listen to and learn from male bosses, and they need to learn how to respond positively to various situations in the workplace, such as training juniors or learning to relate to grouchy female co-workers. “Until now,” Bandō writes, “women haven’t often been in positions where they could cultivate subordinates or juniors, but from now on, that’s an important role women will play” (2008,134). Taking the time to notice a subordinate’s potential is not only crucial, Bandō explains, but it is imperative for women to utilize the Golden Rule and treat their juniors in a way that they would expect to be treated (and praised) by their superiors (133). By training and teaching others, a woman is not only imparting her knowledge, she is imparting a sense of dignity (184). If a fellow co-worker is promoted or is rewarded in the workplace, Bandō advises that the dignified way to react to the situation is not to be jealous of their success but be cordial and work even harder (113). Moreover, if one’s female mentor or superior has “Queen Bee” syndrome, Bandō explains in an interview that dignified women should “continue good job performance” and “take stings with smiles and bring her more nectar than any worker bee, ever” (Kawaguchi 2010, 3). Raz (2002) explains that emotional tensions between female OLs can ensue if one has a more elite education or prior work experience (190-1). Bandō attributes the unpleasant demeanor of a female superior to the various obstacles she
had to overcome by nature of being a woman in the male-dominated Japanese workforce. Bandō elaborates in Kawaguchi’s interview (2010):

Sadly, women in senior positions often look at younger women as competition and instead of supporting them, they make their lives even tougher. “I suffered a lot to get here, so you should, too!” is their attitude (3).

Regardless of such competition, Bandō’s dignified women are expected to resolve tension with female co-workers for the sake of maintaining social harmony in the workplace.

**Dignified OL language**

Using proper language required of OLs is a means to gauge interpersonal relationships and simultaneously maintain social order. Language is a universal way to express thoughts, emotions, and ideas, yet the language of an OL adheres to specific expressions and linguistic formalities. Bandō devotes an entire chapter to describing women’s dignified language. Dignity is inextricably tied to language, she explains, and it is an “absolute requirement for a woman who has dignity and grace to be able to speak in prescribed norms” (Bandō 2008, 16). Keigo (敬語) is the polite form of Japanese expression that denotes hierarchical differences (Hendry 1990, 25).

However, Bandō advises that it is dignified for women to use polite language not only to those in higher positions but to whom you respect, desire to show gratitude, or wish to maintain a “sense of distance” in interpersonal relationships (2008, 41). Bandō warns women of the importance of speaking in these polite expressions especially to male co-workers:

Although ridiculous, men still feel ill at ease if women do not show deference to them, and there are many men who are annoyed when women use language that places them on an equal footing. There is no point in stirring things up. (2008, 42-3)
As Hendry (1990) suggests, *keigo* is a way of “carefully wrapping” and “demonstrating care” of others’ feelings; it is a language that conceals one’s true thoughts and emotions (25). In this way Japanese polite, formal language functions like a metaphorical impediment for Japanese OLs in the male-dominated Japanese workforce—they cannot even truly communicate with co-workers and must limit their thoughts and adhere to linguistic prescripts. Borrowing Oishi Hatsutaro’s comparison of *keigo* to a fence (*kakine* 垣根), formal language required of an OL functions as a kind of defense mechanism that protects her feelings and thoughts (cited in Hendry 1990, 25). It distances co-workers from broaching on uncomfortable, personal territory and makes interpersonal relationships more formal and more comfortable. Bandō (2008) does not write fondly of women who speak candidly:

Some women make a point of coming right out and speaking without reserve, not taking into account the other person’s feelings, but they should be aware that acting this way causes them to be feared rather than respected. (48)

Following Oishi’s idea of Japanese language functioning as a physical barricade, Bandō explains that these barriers prevent women from properly expressing and participating in male-dominated spheres in the workplace. She says in her interview with Kawaguchi (2010):

In Japan, we have “bamboo” barriers that keep women out of the circle of power. Luckily, bamboo is flexible: So, as long as you are, too, you can squeeze your way into the center, just like a little snake or lizard. (3)

*Keigo* as a prescribed linguistic expression echoes Iwao’s approach that women act pragmatically, responding to their environment in an appropriate, dignified way that does not risk tarnishing one’s moral character and defaming one’s reputation as an emotionally invasive female employee.
Bandō is passionate about changing men’s conceptions of women in the workplace as incapable employees. Japanese management functions as an “ideological regime” under the ideas of paternalism and seniority (Raz 2002, 4). Under these kinds of management, women have to work much harder to invade male spheres of work, and in doing so Japanese management suppresses (female) emotion and monitors female language, by prescribing that OLs speak in the polite, formal language and shield their ‘real’ thoughts and feelings. Yet, the lack of OL communication plays an important role, however. In Raz’s interview with an OL, she complains how they are rigorously taught “to reach out and guess the other’s request before he even utters it” (2). OLs have a huge responsibility to respond correctly to the social environment, utilizing the proper expressions prescribed for each situation and intuitively guessing what their employers, clients, and (male) co-workers need. Raz makes a bold claim: [T]he OL is a male-made ideological façade supported by various normative controls. Women are not just serving tea; they are learning how to be good Japanese women (185). Therefore, the OL “façade” is merely a way that Japanese men can groom women to be successful wives and mothers. Because working women in Japan are not expected to reach managerial and executive positions, which would imply a forfeit of their culturally constructed roles as mothers, Bandō laments that men in the workforce do not think seriously about women’s potential. Men stand “unaware” of women’s capabilities and demean “women’s voices” as “emotional, unrealistic female logic” (Iwao 1993, 8). Bandō writes in her USJP Working Paper (2007), “it is difficult for women to work with the same intensity as men,” (7) however she equally chastises women for accepting their fate as employees with a short shelf-lives: “Women in Japan are taught to be modest, supportive, dependent, and never aggressive. Their self-esteem is not very high” (21-2). Women, Bandō
advises, must work through these barriers that force upon them ‘labels’ as mothers, wives, nurturers, and intuitive-guessers.

**OL dissent and consequences**

OLs who are unhappy with these expectations in the workforce can express their dissent, however, fear of shame and the risk of ‘losing face’ are likely consequences. Although Japanese companies manage emotion, this management holds the potential for negative emotions, such as “fatigue, resentment, stress, and hostility” to fester (Raz 2002, 43). Susan Pharr describes an instance of OL rebellion in her article on the “rebellion of the tea pourers” which occurred in 1984 in a Kyoto City Office (cited in Raz 2002, 191). Women were upset with the menial tasks required of them, such as serving tea, cleaning male superiors desk, and emptying ashtrays, among other things. The buildup of ‘emotion’ took time for women to develop a “collective consciousness” (191). Despite the fact that some of their grievances were placated, some of the women quit their positions in the office to marry, and the rebellion abruptly came to an end. Although dissent was voiced, Raz explains that it is very unlikely for OLs to speak out against their environment because they often see a potential conflict as “unrealistic” (190-1). Moreover, Japan places ‘shame’ as a largely dominating ideology that dictates and threatens individuals from deviating from socially prescribed norms. It functions as a “social sanction” and an active awareness of how others perceive your moral character and empathy for others (48). Shame goes beyond the individual and affects the larger social unit. Looking back to Fujiwara’s strong emphasis on *bushidō* (武士道), the conduct code of the samurai, we can see that shame is intricately imbedded in this code. For the samurai shame is the ultimate dishonor of oneself, family, and nation and suicide was the natural consequence of such disgrace. Disgrace for the
rebellious OL takes the form of social suicide, and she is chastised for having too much individuality (*kosei* 個性). This form of social disgrace functions as a way to segregate the obedient OLs from those who are not. An OL described as individualistic (*koseiteki* 個性的) is a social threat and nuisance for Japanese society and the company. Therefore, *kosei* holds a strong negative connotation in Japan, since it represents disruption to social harmony and an unwillingness to be empathetic and “subordinate” one’s interests for the social unit (Tanaka 1990, 89).

Although Bandō warmly associates *kosei* with Western individuality, she identifies it as a term that does not inspire “particularly positive feelings,” and she advises women to “stop labeling people with negative terms” (2008, 47). OLs can express dissent, but it comes at the price of being labeled *kosei*, and they have to wait until other OLs banned together to express collective unhappiness. To fill up the negative space, dignified women are not labeled kosei nor do they do the labeling. They do not express dissent but must discipline their emotions and continue to plug away at their jobs and keep their dissatisfaction to themselves. In Bandō’s eyes, dignified women must realize that if they so choose to voice their disapproval, they must be willing to clean up the mess and face humiliation for disrupting the harmony of the work environment. As Bandō explains in Kawaguchi’s interview (2010), dignified women must learn to resolve tensions without putting others’ feelings or safety at risk:

Dignity means that when you’re breaking the glass ceiling, you do it very carefully to make sure that the shards don’t hurt anyone. And afterward, of course, you pick up the pieces. (2)
The OL burikko

However, a more commonplace way for OLs to express dissent is by acting as a burikko (ブリッコ). The role of a burikko is an exaggerated OL performance, a highly conscientious act of childish cuteness and immaturity. Acting as a burikko is an “alternate form of self-expression” that exaggerates qualities that men deem feminine, such as innocence, vulnerability, and adorability (Raz 2002, 192). Although the burikko is often demonstrated in the workplace, it is not limited to OLs. Bandō (2008) does not refer to the burikko by name in her advice manual, but she does admonish women who overemphasize a feminine voice, but this is undignified behavior:

A “ladylike” thin voice or high-pitched voice is harsh to the ear and seems insincere.

Particular with superiors or men in general, some women purposely attempt to be more “feminine” by speaking in a wheedling voice or higher-pitched voice, but they give the impression of having no grace or refinement at all. (44)

Bandō describes at length in this chapter about dignified language the importance of speaking clearly and loudly to convey the impression that one is emotionally “calm” and “well balanced” (2008, 44). She works to sear through the film that prevents men from seeing women’s true potential and ability to handle more responsibility in the company. Acting as a burikko is not only undignified, but it continues to solidify men’s unfavorable perception of women in the workforce as inept, immature individuals. This behavior, Bandō warns, will undoubtedly prevent women from rising to managerial and executive positions. In Bandō’s eyes, the burikko represents weakness and a mockery of women’s capabilities, both as employees and as members of the nation. The burikko feigns sexual innocence, imposing the idea that she is neither emotionally ready for the responsibilities of the housewife nor physically prepared for childbirth.
The *burikko* performance is a precarious form of dissent that seemingly resists yet complies with social expectations and perceptions of women.

Bandō’s book elucidates the various obstacles and gender discrimination that women face in the company. However, she does not encourage resistance to these norms but rather chooses to inform women of the true nature of the situation. Bandō chooses the word ‘dignity’ as a way to encourage women to cultivate themselves and realize their potential in the Japanese male-dominated company. Bandō fervently supports women who do not give up on their careers once they marry, and she believes that if women do so, they will prove their worth in the workplace and inspire other women to do the same. Bandō explains her hope for the future of the OL:

In the future, large numbers of women will enter the workforce, and many of them will inevitably have to work behind the scenes. I am confident that within that environment, female professionals who possess dignity will increase and thrive (173).

Bandō acknowledges the disparities and misconceptions about women’s abilities, but she is more about working with the system rather than challenging it. An OL’s dignity is a physical discipline, emotional awareness, self-realization, and graceful lifestyle; dignity takes on an osmotic effect—cultivating dignity will undoubtedly bestow upon others (co-workers, friends, etc.) a sense of dignity.
Chapter Three
Sacrifice & Gratification of the OL

Mariko Bandō is a career powerhouse, an organized housewife, intuitive wife, and attentive mother. Hiroko Hirakawa describes Bandō as the “having-it-all” superwoman (2011, 140). Contrary to Bandō’s advice for the OL to multi-task and successfully engage herself in the spheres of home and work life, AnAn advises women to spend time and money on their appearance, health, and emotional state of being. What is the relationship between the advice in Bandō’s book and AnAn and the way OL readers are reading and interpreting the advice stated in each? Although Bandō relays the idea that she has succeeded in every task that comes her way, she does not include any instances of failure due to lethargy, miscommunication, or just plain apathy. However, I assume that readers of Bandō’s book make the connection that Bandō must have made mistakes or in the least experienced hardships during her career and in her role as a housewife and mother. Reading between the lines, readers of Bandō’s book might have realized the unlikelihood of being able to complete every chore with equal doses of time and enthusiasm, as Bandō suggests.

This chapter compares the explicit and implicit forms of sacrifice and gratification advocated to the female readers of both Bandō’s book and AnAn. I aim to analyze the cultural relevance of what I consider to be gray, unexplored areas in both Bandō’s book and AnAn and the significance of the brevity of such information regarding OL sacrifices, desires, and anxieties constructed by these two pieces of advice literature. I look at how Bandō suggests or implies sacrifices regarding romance, marital fidelity, and motherhood and possible reasons why she
conveniently chooses to gloss over, ignore, or altogether omit discussing these topics in her book. Likewise, I analyze the paucity of direct reference to OL culture in *AnAn* as a way to understand OL emotional anxieties and physical tensions brought about by their participation in the workplace. Although the OL workplace is not explicitly described in *AnAn*, the magazine still *involves* or at least evokes the workplace by providing the OL the opportunity for escape and leisure; I identify *AnAn* as the ‘after hours’ scene.

I ultimately aim to show in this chapter how the advice in Bandō’s book and *AnAn* present the OL reader with two very different opportunities to achieve individual gratification. I attempt to avoid marginalizing and unfairly pitting Bandō’s ambitious career-track OL against *AnAn*’s seemingly less motivated OL, nor do I mean to unjustly compare whose sacrifice is greater and the more warranted. Rather, I hope to explain how the sacrifices and means of gratification offered to the *AnAn* OL differ from those suggested to Bandō’s readers and to show what kinds of sacrifices and fulfillment are presented to each OL readership. This should illuminate the range of ‘other’ life trajectories available to Japan’s OLs. References to the *AnAn* OL readers draw upon Sumiko Iwao’s model of the women who follow the “general” employment track--women who choose to complete the low-pressure tasks required of them and then return home. Bandō promotes the workplace as the arena for individual fulfillment whereas *AnAn* encourages consumerism as a means for happiness.

The first idea I introduce is that of the ‘home’ and its function as both a theoretical structure and significant cultural construction in Bandō’s book and *AnAn*. The home functions not only as a physical structure that necessitates time, money, and upkeep, it functions as a cultural construction of OL responsibilities and domestic duties. We can ask the questions: how is Bandō’s dignified OL or *AnAn*’s trendy OL taking care of the home, challenging or adhering
to Japan’s home ideal and domestic duties? What forms of sacrifice and gratification come from OL involvement in the home as outlined by Bandō’s book and *AnAn*?

As Bandō explains, once she herself married, her husband did not oppose her decision to continue to work. However, Bandō explains that she knew early on in her marriage that the role of the housewife was her responsibility, since her husband “wouldn’t help at all” (taken from Onishi’s 2008 article). This distinct divide between male and female responsibilities, in both the home and career, seems to model Takie Lebra’s discussion about “role dimorphism.” This kind of split is based on Japan’s “supposed uniqueness of femininity” and its “cultural tendency to eulogize femininity and womanhood” by drawing parallel lines between the Japanese wife/woman and domestic duties and the Japanese husband/man with full-time occupation and income (Lebra 2007, 143-4). This model seems apt for describing the explicit division of labor in Bandō’s marital relationship, although Bandō performs these domestic chores begrudgingly. She glosses over domestic duties and her role as the primary caretaker of the home, and she is unwilling to make her involvement in home life and the chores it entails a priority. As Bandō explains:

> Some women think it’s their duty to tend to all the household chores, too. […] And on occasions when you are just too busy or too tired, don’t feel guilty about hiring domestic help or using a professional cleaning service. Take the pragmatic approach to buy yourself some time and give yourself some leeway. (2008, 167)

Here, Bandō expresses her discontent with society’s (and implicitly her husband’s) expectations for her to be the sole caretaker of the home. We see Bandō’s more socially progressive side and how greatly she values her participation in the career as opposed to her socially constructed, role-dimorphic, involvement in the home. Bandō, rather seems to follow the pattern of bimorphism,
in which “the woman invades the formerly male-dominated occupational world without, however, renouncing her domestic functions” (146). Bandō acknowledges her domestic duties and martial responsibilities, yet she strives to find a balance in the two spheres, one that is culturally thrust upon her, and one that is self-chosen, the workplace. To borrow Lebra’s term, a “biomorphic” woman must sacrifice in bigger and different ways than “role dimorphic” housewife. Bandō as both the ambitious OL woman and the enthusiastic advice-provider seems to fervently challenge normative OL expectations.

In Bandō’s statement in the previous paragraph, we can see that she relinquishes her domestic power within the home as the domestic matriarch, the one maintaining and supplying familial order. She happily surrenders her domestic power to house-help and technology, suggesting that she implicitly sacrifices her domestic ability to create the home for herself, for her husband, and her participation in the familial sphere at large. Lebra explains:

[A]utomation has simplified domestic work[…] which might have resulted in more leisure than the housewife could enjoy and also use to develop proficiency in roles outside the home. […]Housework cannot be clearly differentiated from other kinds of work, or from play. (2007, 145)

Bandō is in favor of technology and other means that help simplify and lighten the housewife ‘burden.’ She is not ashamed to admit that she even relied on help from her parents who often traveled from Tokyo to help out with housework and the care of Bandō’s two daughters (Onishi 2008, 3). Help from others and technology simplify OL domestic chores, freeing up time for personal enjoyment. However, Bandō’s personal fulfillment is not in terms of leisure or ‘play.’ Rather, as explained in the previous chapter, she sees the workplace as a site where OLs can
establish their valuable contributions, participation, and self-cultivate themselves for the sake of rising up the career ladder.

Bandō’s personal gratification is not through the completion of her domestic duties nor is it measured by her identity as a mother. Although she mentions her role as a mother, albeit briefly and sparingly throughout the course of her book, she reveals just how serious she is about her career and work by explaining her inner conflict of trying to gauge which matter—either her daughter’s health or her meeting—is more important. From the passage below, we see Bandō’s struggle trying to manage both her two dichotomous identities, as a mother and as a serious career woman. However, it is interesting to note that she does not reveal to the reader which situation took precedence. We are only left to wonder. However, given her staunch interest in advising women that the workforce is a means of bringing about individual fulfillment and validation of one’s capabilities, perhaps it is not absurd to assume that she may have chosen to attend the meeting over nursing her ill child:

If you have a job, then your first priority is work. I myself have put work first.

Nonetheless, during the period when you become pregnant and until your children are two or three, your family rises in priority. There were any number of times when my daughter developed a fever when I had an important meeting scheduled and I wavered and worried over which was more important. (Bandō 2008, 166)

Clearly, Bandō sees her career as the ultimate means of personal gratification and fulfillment. Bandō is willing to counter Japan’s ideal of domestic femininity and role dimorphic expectations. Through her sacrifice of domestic duties and her investment in technology, she is able to spend more time on her career.
Conversely, the *AnAn* woman does not seek upward mobility in the workforce nor does she actively pursue opportunities that might put her in line for promotion; she does not seem to follow the same journey that Bandō lays out for her dignified, ambitious OLs. If the *AnAn* OL reader is not experiencing an identity crisis or wrestling with time management conflicts that plague Bandō’s dignified OL, what does the *AnAn* OL woman hope to find in terms of personal fulfillment and gratification in the realms of the home, and what shape does her sacrifice take? *AnAn* as a magazine promotes women to actively take care of the home and to spend time and money decorating it. This is an important process which suggests that femininity can be ‘bought’ by an over-the-counter, monetary cash exchange. This kind of feminine identity is determined by what the *AnAn* reader buys, and how well the *AnAn* OL reader chooses to follow its advice. The *AnAn* OL may not have the same marital responsibilities and social obligations that Bandō’s career-driven OL may have. If we make the assumption that she is not married, we can make the assumption that in this case the ‘home’ and the creation of the ‘house’ is for her personal use.

The women portrayed in *AnAn* seem to enjoy spending time shopping and enjoying the products that enhance their homes and living spaces; they convey the idea that their homes are forums for leisure, comfort, and escape. As Sarah Frederick explains, “company guidelines stress the value of women’s contributions as workers but emphasize their distinct roles […h]ome life should always maintain a feeling of domesticity, and the modern home, while efficient, should nonetheless always provide shelter from modern stress” (2006, 91). Moreover, Ishikawa Takeyoshi, editor of one of Japan’s interwar magazines, *Shufu no tomo* (The housewife’s friend), explains, “the biggest mistake in Japan is to confuse the home with the office” (cited in Frederick 2006, 91). It is interesting that Ishikawa’s sentiment seems to echo *AnAn*’s advice in terms of distinguishing the home as a place of leisure and escape, separate from the office. If the *AnAn*
OL reader makes this distinction, then we can assume that she is more involved in the ‘home,’ in comparison to Bandō, and she enjoys spending time in the home. Following this logic, AnAn promotes domesticity and advises its OL readers to invest and enjoy home life.

AnAn advises its OL readers to be good consumers to create the ‘home’ as a leisurely, enjoyable space for the OL. John Clammer explains in his chapter, “Theorizing Consumption in Urban Japan,” that for “most contemporary Japanese, consumption behavior is the major available form of self-expression” (1997, 153). Indeed, AnAn promotes consumption, but it is a particular kind of consumption. Therefore, if consumption represents Clammer’s idea of “self-expression,” then an adherence to AnAn’s advice suggests that the OL must sacrifice her personal style and ‘expression’ and yield to AnAn’s strong persuasion towards consumerism. Clammer (1997) explains that consumerism creates “possible lifestyles,” and establishes identity and the “creation of a sense of selfhood” (“Theorizing” 155). AnAn advises OLs how to properly invest and decorate the home through various goods and technologies that guarantee lessening the exhaustive aspect of domestic chores. In Figure 1 below, a young woman is shown cheerfully standing next to a washer and dryer.
The image explains that this washer and dryer duo is perfect for the young woman who is busy (isogashii 忙しい) with love (koi 恋) and work (shigoto 仕事). This advertisement reveals how AnAn tries to find solutions for the modern Japanese OL who struggles to manage various responsibilities in her life and making time for the things that she wants to pursue. AnAn suggests that through purchasing this technology, the OL will have more leisure time to invest in either her work or pursuing love. This image is an example of how AnAn encourages consumerism in order to give its readers more flexibility and choice in their lives, ultimately providing the OL with an opportunity for happiness and personal gratification.

On Love and Marriage

In terms of love and courtship, Bandō implicitly suggests romance must be sacrificed in order to become a successful, dignified OL. She implies that emotions may detract from yielding a better, more productive work environment (2008, 185). However, Bandō seems quite pleased that women are marrying later in life, and she makes the assumption that the reason for this is because women, like herself, enjoy working towards professional careers and have prioritized their careers over marriage and family life. She writes approvingly of women’s decision to do this in her preface:

Women now make up 41 percent of the workforce, and women are beginning to move into administrative positions in the workplace. Meanwhile, Japanese women are marrying later in life and the childbirth rate has decline. The sphere of a woman’s activities has expanded well beyond the limits of the household. (Bandō 2008, 2)

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12 「洗濯乾燥機「プチドラマ」は恋&仕事に忙しい女子の味方！！」No. 1756. Pg. 64
Although the focus of Bandō’s book advises working women to self-cultivate themselves in regard to dignity in the workplace, she makes no comment regarding marital strife, happiness, and her personal life. Are we to assume that it would not be ‘dignified’ to include such information, that it shows a sign of emotional weakness on Bandō’s part as the advice-giver? What Bandō does provide in her book regarding relationships is a short section entitled, “Cultivating a man who has dignity” (2008, 195). Here, she writes that she understands women perceive rich men as attractive, but she advises women to look beyond men as a source of stable income and pick the right partner. In other words, women have a responsibility to pick a man with dignity, and by properly choosing their partner their own sense of dignity will increase and the fate of the nation will improve. Bandō explains: “If women choose a reliable, solid man, it will change the world” (2008, 198).

Bandō’s advice regarding love and marriage is comparatively scanty in her book, yet the information that she does provide reveals how she views marriage as a social norm and romance as a distraction. She seems to acknowledge that OLs might marry sometime during their careers, although she does not seem to expect all OLs to do so. As previously stated, the only advice that we are given regarding marital relations is that it is a woman’s responsibility to pick her dignified partner, and once she has done so, she should continue to pursue work in the company. Sumiko Iwao (1993) explains a “relationship like air” and how that relationship most often intercedes the lives of women who belong to the first postwar generation, the generation to which Bandō herself belongs. A “relationship like air” is not meaningless and airy, rather it is a kind of relationship that is imperative “for the survival of both sides even though its presence is hardly felt” (75). Bandō’s marriage seems to fit Iwao’s model of the ‘airy’ marital relationship, as we can assume that she is “not fully satisfied with [her] relationship,” and she constantly seeks
ways in which she can prove her worth and equality to her husband (75-6). Bandō’s relationship is one where romance is seemingly absent.

Romance and dating are not priorities of Bandō’s ideal, dignified OL. If a married OL finds herself attracted to someone other than her husband, especially if that person is a co-worker, Bandō advises her to emotionally discipline herself and never admit her feelings. According to Bandō:

I don’t intend to preach that a woman with a family ought not to fall in love. […]

Regardless of what kind of love it is, one that is not revealed and one-sided is the most thrilling and exciting. (2008, 185-7)

This passage in Bandō’s book advises OLs not to confess romantic feelings, and Bandō begins this section explaining that love is at its greatest when one does not speak but endures (2006, 193). As Mark West (2011) explains in Lovesick Japan, there are many different words used to describe love, romance, and feeling in Japan (29). Bandō uses the term koi (戀) in the first line (2006, 193), and as West elucidates, koi is a term most often used to convey a sexual connotation (2011, 34). This is interesting because it reveals how Bandō is in support of the OL suppressing her physical desires for the sake of protecting her reputation in the company and marital relationship. However, as the passage continues, Bandō uses the word ren’ai (恋愛) to reference love (2006, 193). Although ren’ai is most often used by modern Japanese translators to refer to the Western sense of romance and affection, Mark West explains that the concept of love in Japanese linguistically denotes “wanting and sadness” (2011, 29). Ultimately, Bandō sees romance as a distraction for the OL and as a disruptance to others, something that holds the potential to destroy relationships and the harmony of the group.
Love and courtship in *AnAn* is advised to the OL reader through the use of text and images. Learning how to date correctly, or more specifically *who* to date, are keys that are given to the *AnAn* OL reader as a reward for investing time and energy reading its contents. Just as Bandō’s advice teaches the OL how to self-cultivate herself towards a life imbued with dignity, *AnAn*’s advice provides the OL reader with a similar cost and benefit scale. Finding romance is a strategy and skill that can only be taught by *AnAn*, and this conveys the idea that the *AnAn* reader would be unsuccessful finding love and courtship by herself; she is a pupil in a classroom-like environment seeking guidance of its question and answer columns, humor supplied by the cartoon manga spreads, and the solace of a space where she can read freely and at her own pace.

*AnAn* advises OL readers how to successfully date, attract, and even gracefully break-up (or accept a break-up) with men and lovers. The text and image below is part of a question and answer spread that advises ‘how to’ date a divorced man, otherwise known in Japanese as a *batsuichi*. *Batsuichi* (パツイチ) is written in the katakana syllabary, and the first half of the word, *batsu* (パツ), means incorrect and symbolizes the ‘x-mark,’ and it is often humorously used by television comedy and game shows as a blaring buzz to indicate wrong answers or egregious mistakes. The second half of the word, *ichi* (イチ), means ‘first time.’ Essentially the *batsuichi* man is a no-good man that has been married once, and as a divorcee he must endure the negative cultural and social implications of his failed marriage. This image was not chosen as a means to shed light on any kind of cultural phenomenon where Japanese women find male divorcees attractive or socially desirable. Rather it was chosen to show the extent to which *AnAn* advises its female readers to gain the confidence to pursue their romantic feelings and voice their interest, even when the social stakes are very high or when other social factors can determine the potential of the relationship (i.e. interactions with the ex-wife, meeting his children, etc). To
elaborate on what I mean when I refer to social stakes, in Japan there is a “recent unease about the frequency of divorce in Japan,” and it shatters the image of the “happiness of the family and the health of the state” (Fuess 2000, 2). In other words, a man from a fractured marriage could be socially and culturally interpreted as a man who failed in his social obligations; the divorce mars his character and social standing. The question posed in Figure 2 below, most likely asked by a curious AnAn reader, translates how to ‘melt’ the heart of the bitter, divorced man that she likes, and the woman who answers her request is Yoshirei-san, assumedly an AnAn editor or journalist.\(^\text{13}\)

![Figure 2: April 28 2011, No. 1756. Pg. 75](image)

The article advises women that if the batsuchi whom they like appears emotionally distant, it may be because he is lonely and still hurting from the emotional effects of his broken marriage. Therefore, the reader should make an effort to casually invite him or ask him out on a date, as Yoshirei-san encourages the reader that he might be pleasantly surprised. To analyze women’s curiosity about how to date divorced men suggests that the relationships that these women are

\(^{13}\)「好きになった男性がバツイチ。「恋愛はもうここごり」と言っている彼の心を解かやすには？」 No. 1756. Pg. 75
understood to seek indeed have the potential to be sexual ones, since a divorced man is sexually experienced.

**Sexual intimacy**

Sexual relationships and physical intimacy are discussed or at least insinuated by Bandō and *AnAn* very differently. As explained earlier, Bandō encourages women to emotionally discipline their bodies and thoughts to avoid romance and engaging in (extramarital) affairs that could threaten their ability to function and their reputation in the workforce. Yet she completely leaves out explicit information regarding physical intimacy, coupling, and (marital) fidelity. An interpretation of this paucity of information may reveal what Bandō herself sacrificed for the sake of her professional career. If we take this approach of analyzing the negative space, we can conjecture that Bandō might have given up physical intimacy in her marriage to let her career flourish, and that she perhaps chose not to overtly include such information since that might deter the OL reader from working towards a dignified lifestyle.

However, Bandō does at least evoke sympathy regarding her personal sacrifices. She encourages women to “[l]eave private matters alone” (2008, 129). She explains how dignified women do not gossip, meddle in other people’s business, especially that of their husbands. Even if a woman notices something unusual, “[she] has to act as [she] had not seen it” (125). According to Bandō, a woman should “support her husband within the limits of private life” (191). Bandō’s advice reads like a euphemism for women’s tacit acknowledgement towards sexual affairs. We can interpret Bandō’s advice and use it to reveal the same kind of emotional discipline that she would give to any woman who discovered that her husband was having an affair:
True anger, rather than being allowed to burst forth in an explosion, is something you should consider first, then decide when, where, and how to express, taking your time and doing it with composure in order to express it most effectively. (2008, 125)

Is a man’s involvement in an extramarital affair even a likely situation? According to Paul Wiseman in his article, “No sex please—we’re Japanese,” men feel threatened and emasculated by the success and assertiveness of their ambitious career-driven wives and significant others (2004, 1-2). Affairs, or men seeking extramarital physical or emotional contact with other women, could be interpreted as a way for men to reclaim their identities as sexual, masculine beings. Mark West (2011) explains that “[t]he commodification and contractualization of love in Japan runs deeper than the legal ties of marriage,” (171) and generally speaking of contemporary Japanese society, “sex with love is up, sex in marriage is down, and sex that occurs in marriage is seen as a duty unrelated to love” (121). Bandō omits information that alludes to her sacrifice of romance, physical and emotional intimacy, yet the sacrifice seems to go beyond the realm of women in Japanese society. Men also seem to be sacrificing if they allow their girlfriends, fiancées, or spouses to continue to pursue their careers. As Mark West demonstrates, there seems to be an undeniable cause and effect relationship between women who seek long-term, professional careers and sexual and emotional sacrifice by both parties (in a heterosexual relationship).

In contrast to the sexual sacrifice implicated in Bandō’s book, sex and physical intimacy in AnAn are ‘popular’ topics. AnAn gives OL readers advice about relationships, with the understanding that they will become sexual. In the case of the OL who reads AnAn’s advice to snag her batsuichi, this dating scenario functions in such a way that we can understand how
AnAn advises women how to become potential girlfriends and ultimately, lovers. Even in the title of the batsuichi question and answer forum, the term koibito (恋人) arises, and this means ‘lover.’ We can make the connection that AnAn readers are not only curious how to initiate conversation and confess their feelings to the men that they like, but they are also curious how to become sexually involved in relationships. In Figure 3 below, the popular Japanese heartthrob, actor-singer-model Matsumoto Jun, is on the cover of the February 2007 AnAn edition.

Figure 3: February 2007, Online magazine cover

This image clearly revolves around physical intimacy and the ‘how to’ aspect of sex. The title of the cover translates to ‘the right way to love your man’- 「正しい男の愛し方」. AnAn affirms the idea that having sex is glamorous, and we can understand this image to mean that AnAn is in favor of and encourages women to engage in sexual relationships. The ‘how to’ aspect of the advice captured in this image conveys the idea that sex is fun and learnable, and AnAn will teach

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3 「バツイチ男が，恋人に向いているって本当？」 No. 1756. Pg. 69
the reader ‘how.’ Through sexual intercourse women can assert their feminine identities and simultaneously gain sexual gratification.

As previously explained, *AnAn* glamorizes and teaches women the ‘how to’ of sexual intimacy. Yet it is interesting that in the April 2011 special edition of *AnAn*, sexual relations are presented in terms of hygienic and practical issues as something that requires caution and ‘correct’ knowledge in order to protect the health of the OL reader. The title of this edition is *Onna no karada nayami kaiketsu* (女のカラダ悩み解決), which roughly translates to mean ‘women’s bodies, worries and solutions.’ Instead of referring to sex as a ‘way to love,’ *aishikata* (愛し方), as it is used in the *AnAn* cover featuring Matsumoto Jun, sexual relations are described in this edition and in Figure 4 by a transliteration of the word ‘sex,’ *sekkusu* (セックス) in the Katakana syllabary. It seems apt to assume that *sekkusu* in this special edition denotes physical intimacy as a private matter. In Figure 4 below, the advice in this column informs OL readers how to correctly and safely avoid pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases with the use of contraceptives, specifically condoms.

Figure 4: April 2010, Special Edition. Pg. 99

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4 Here and elsewhere translations from the Japanese unless otherwise noted are my own.
Another interesting point about the advice in Figure 4 is that *AnAn* explicitly advises women of the importance of being careful and ‘selective’ about their sexual partners. *AnAn’s* advice discourages women from promiscuous behavior, as the magazine encourages women that it is best to engage in physical intimacy with someone that they have been dating for a while.\(^5\) The image also explains the importance of washing before and after sex, and the importance of testing for STDs if one should suspect that there is a problem.

*AnAn’s* advice in this special edition describes the ‘how to’ aspect of sex—how to properly use contraception, wash, and choose a sexual partner—but from the standpoint that sex requires keen awareness of the dangers of sex and the importance of hygiene. In comparison to the Matsumoto Jun cover which glamorizes sex, advice in this special edition conveys the idea that the practicality of engaging in sex is a highly private concern and that women’s bodies are also private concerns. The *AnAn* reader may indulge in sexual gratification, but *AnAn* advises women to be cautious, prepared, and well informed about their decision to do so.

**Public and Private OL Bodies**

Bandō’s advice reveals that the OL body is a *public* concern and it is the responsibility of a dignified OL to be aware of her sexuality and conceal it for the sake of the company. Bandō acknowledges that women’s bodies are innately imbued with sexual meanings, and it is a dignified OL’s responsibility to subdue any sexual perceptions of herself in the workplace. Bandō implicitly reveals that women’s bodies can threaten the harmony and productivity of the work environment. Many Japanese white-collar companies require their OLs to wear uniforms, yet Bandō explains that dignified women must be willing to sacrifice their personal sense of taste

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\(^5\) 「人ごとではないSTD」April 2010 special edition. Pg.99
and clothing style to wear what is appropriate. She advises women not to buy particularly trendy clothing, especially clothing that is “eccentric or, to put it in extreme terms, close to being experimental in design” (Bandō 2008, 60). We can interpret her advice to stay away from these trendy fashions as a euphemism for avoiding sexual, tawdry clothing. Instead of indulging in the season’s latest trends, Bandō advises:

It is more important to […] get] a solid sense of yourself being alive from day to day and standing your group at an appropriate point. (2008, 62)

According to Bandō, wearing the appropriate clothing is a form of propriety, and it is essential for the harmony and success of the company. The well-dressed OL is a capable, contributing member of the company.

Moreover, Bandō explains that it is a dignified OL’s responsibility to preserve her feminine virtue and mystique, and that the OL as a public body is vulnerable to male judgment and scrutiny. Bandō compares the female body and female sexuality to the Japanese aesthetic of iki, “a form of stylishness or chic, and the charm of iropposa, provocative sensuality” (2008, 178). She explains that a dignified OL must take the necessary precautions to protect her femininity. Bandō explains that an overt show of OL sexuality by exposing her body is the opposite of dignity and reduces her feminine beauty:

Not only is it more dignified to keep a little concealed than to expose too much, it is also more alluring. […] Clearly displaying the beauty of a woman’s body to the public […] is not recommended […] and it diminishes the attractiveness of a woman. (2008, 69)

However, it is ironic that this passage is entitled “Concealed, a flower exists” (Bandō 2008, 68). Kittredge Cherry (2002) explains that young OLs are often referred to as “office flowers,”
women who brighten up the typically masculine company space with their youthful beauty (105). Bandō, as the distinguished OL who ‘made it,’ seems to represent the antithesis of the fragile “office flower.” However, it is the ways in which the “office flower” maintains her feminine comportment, her _iki_, that Bandō deems necessary of dignified OLs. Bandō encourages women to be ambitious in their careers, yet she advises women to do so in a graceful, feminine manner. However, she warns her readers of the dangers that may befall them as a result of their male co-workers and bosses perceiving them as women and as bodies to be sexually dominated. Bandō explicitly discusses the possibility of rape and sexual harassment in the workplace, if women do not learn to say ‘no’ to their male bosses and co-workers correctly. OLs should neither be too direct and rough (masculine), nor should they be too fragile and shy (feminine). She explains:

> There are occasions, however, when women have to use language that makes their refusal very explicit. […] Because of this, some women find themselves facing aggressive behavior when they try to say no. With too lenient an attitude, some women have even become victims of rape. (2008, 52-3)

Bandō is not about disrupting the social harmony of the company. She neither wants to alienate nor offend her male co-workers and superiors, so she explains that it is critical that OLs must find a ‘medium road’ that will allow them to verbally express themselves, especially when refusing requests (or perhaps sexual advancements). Bandō’s dignified OLs train and cultivate men to respect them as women and value their contributions as women.

Lastly, we can see that _AnAn_’s advice reveals that the OL _private_ body is a _public_ concern. _AnAn_’s OL readers must sacrifice time and effort to maintain the proper OL appearance and performance. Men’s criticism and advice in _AnAn_ reveals that the natural, make-up free OL body is offensive and disappointing. _AnAn_ includes men’s voices in the magazine as a way to
advise women to sacrifice personal comfort for the sake of protecting their physical appearance, female mystique, and to avoid male criticism; AnAn encourages women to preserve their iki. In Figure 5, we see four Japanese men conversing, and the information in the left half of the image provides their name, age, occupation, and hobbies. These men are not conversing about their work or pastimes, they are discussing women’s physical attributes and behaviors that they find attractive and unattractive. Figure 6 portrays two cartoon characters in bed. The female character has removed her fake eyelashes, her beauty guise, and the male cartoon appears frightened and confused. He is beside himself, holding himself and crying, and he woefully recalls how attractive the woman lying next to him used to be. The small print hovering over his head, 「あの日に帰りたい」, reveals his desire to return home on the day of love-making, because he witnessed his partner without her color contacts and false eyelashes.

In this cartoon’s opinion, the natural state of an OL is unnatural, and her appearance and body as a private beauty is ugly and offensive. Moreover, since the female cartoon figure displays her willingness to divulge her beauty secrets, this consequently destroys her iki, and this is

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6 「二度惚れしたり、幻滅したり。男が好む変って？」 No. 1771. 90-91.
aesthetically and socially displeasing. However, in Figure 7, one of the four Japanese company workers gives his mark of approval.

Figure 7: No. 1771 pg.90

Here, we see a look of admiration that a male observer gives to a reading OL. The bold face print reads that it is intriguing and cute when women show up at the workplace wearing glasses, only on (work) holidays. The word ‘only,’ ‘だけ’, reveals the extent to which men hold OLs responsible to a certain standard of physical appearance—only on holidays, days of leisure, can OLs loosen up on their rigid OL performance and appearance. It is interesting that AnAn cartoons are the images of choice to express and explain women’s health and sexual problems. Even in the case of the AnAn April 2010 special edition, women’s private issues, concerns, and worries about their bodies were communicated through cartoons and not images or photographs of ‘real’ women. Therefore, it is appropriate to assume that the OL body is a highly contested site of anxieties, private fears, and criticism.

The advice in Bandō’s book and AnAn reveal that the OL is a complex socially constructed identity. The OL body is shaped, disciplined, and critiqued in an effort ultimately to provide the OL reader with the opportunity to achieve personal gratification. For Bandō, success is measured by her involvement and contribution in the workforce, and for AnAn, fulfillment is
in terms of romance, consumerism, and free time. However, there is a paucity of information explaining the consequences and sacrifices that confront OLs in both Bandō’s book and AnAn. Bandō sacrifices sexual, romantic relationships, and her relationship with her family in order to pursue her happiness. AnAn’s advice implies that the OL must be willing to sacrifice time, money, and personal style to continue the charade of OL femininity and to adhere to male standards and expectations. OL beauty, leisure, and fulfillment is ultimately left up to the OL reader. She determines her own means of gratification and what she is willing and unwilling to sacrifice to achieve happiness.
Chapter Four
Concluding Remarks and Analysis

This chapter provides an explanation to the possible reasons why OL readers might favor either Bandō’s advice or *AnAn’s*. I explain what I consider to be the more successful, practical, and valuable to the modern Japanese OL reader. I believe that there is a conclusion to be drawn regarding why OL readers are confronted with these competing absences in women’s advice literature. I ultimately hope to explain the forms of agency that female OL readers have in a society where OL responsibilities and the OL image and body are created and disciplined by nation, society, and company. OLs do exert their agency through their decision to participate as readers of advice literature, and they can choose to either follow or reject the advice provided in Bandō’s book or in *AnAn*. It is this kind of female readership-empowerment that explains how I perceive the Japanese OL to be a woman, beyond the scope of a reader, who is indeed in charge of her image, her body. She is more than the cultural prototype of the clerical worker, and she asserts her desires and plans for the future, even if that means occasionally clashing with Japan’s cultural norms that prescribe decent, disciplined OL behavior.

**Marriage as OL Anxiety**

Japanese OLs, whether they are married, starting to raise their own families, or transitioning into a relationship with the likelihood of marriage are very likely to be plagued with
various anxieties that can arise in their home lives. As Takie Lebra explains in her chapter, “Sex Equality for Japanese Women,” Japanese women who find their roles primarily in the home “must suffer anxiety” as they raise the children and adhere to the “traditional pattern of intergenerational dependence” (2007, 146). These women learn to compromise their personal desires for the sake of the harmony of the home and the wellbeing of their family members, as they are culturally expected to take care of elderly parents and parents-in-law.

Lebra’s statement reflects the very anxieties that Bandō does not openly reveal in her book yet seems to implicitly hint towards. In Chapter Three, I explain how Bandō avoids revealing the various sacrifices that she might have personally underwent as a result of her desire to continue working as a professional. I argue that she chooses to sacrifice personal relationships with co-workers, female friends, romance and physical intimacy in her marital relationship, and her matriarchal authority within the home. However, Bandō openly praises women who are like her—those ambitious, busy women who postpone marriage for the sake of holding onto their careers. Bandō writes for the OL who is serious about contemplating the cost-and-benefit ratio of career or the home. According to Bandō, the gains of pursuing a professional career far outweigh the social and leisure opportunities that her reader might inevitably have to sacrifice.

As Lebra explains, “[T]he overwhelming majority of women are bound by the idea of tekireiki (marriageable age), which generates a sense of urgency in a single woman over twenty-four and embarrassment in a ‘leftover’ woman of thirty or more. Whereas an unmarried woman is the object of derogatory gossip, an unmarried man arouses only nurturant sympathy” (2007, 149). The OL identity is indeed understood as a transient identity, which lasts until OLs decide to marry (or succumb to pressures to get married). The beauty of an OL as an office flower, as described in Chapter Two, will eventually wilt, and it considered to be her responsibility to the
company and to society to marry. Women who choose not to marry may be considered socially unfit, not responsible, and selfish, and they are at risk of being subject to familial pressures and corporate tensions.

Bandō’s OL readers may choose not to marry at all, or at least postpone marriage. As I discussed in Chapter Two, Bandō seems to assume that women are actively deciding to delay marriage in order to pursue their careers, a decision that she seems to clearly support. Indeed the national age of women who marry in Japan has steadily increased (Rebick cited in Yamada 2009, 10). This might be a possible explanation of women’s decisions to pursue careers, or perhaps it is because of women’s anxieties surrounding the home sphere (name-changing, taking care of inlaws, etc.) that prevents them from marrying.

AnAn, conversely, seems to shy away from mentioning marriage as a ‘hot’ topic in their weekly issues. Instead, the magazine tends to produce a steady flow of advice for women who seek romantic and/or sexual relationships with co-workers, divorcees, widowers, and the like. Issues concerning marital name-changing, child-rearing, and the ‘how to’ of balancing housework while maintaining a career, are topics neither explained or explored, visually or textually, in the magazine. I suggest that this paucity of information, this ‘negative space,’ is significant, as it reveals a similar set of anxieties surrounding marriage and the ‘home’ that Bandō also seems to omit in her advice. The AnAn OL reader is anxious yet curious to attract a suitable mate, and she seeks to validate herself as ‘female’ and (sexually) attractive by receiving the approval from the male gaze; she seeks the affection and social affirmation of her female identity from lovers, boyfriends, or potential marriage partners. Ultimately she seeks the approval of men to validate her femininity.
Ascribing ‘femininity’ to the OL body as a cultural necessity

Bandō’s advice creates a frame of femininity for her OL readers. Granted, men may read Bandō’s advice, but she writes for the improvement and self-cultivation of women, specifically Japan’s working women. It is important therefore to note that her writing does not make the distinction between gender and biological sex. Instead, she merges femininity, as a culturally learned and self-reflexive identity, with female biology. Bandō’s advice, strictly speaking, is catered to Japan’s biologically female OLs who desire to learn how to emphasize their femininity and live dignified, graceful lives. This perhaps reveals how Bandō herself views and interprets femininity—as an advisable and expected trait that all biologically female women must learn. Her advice excludes members of Japanese society and potential readers of her book who are biologically male and identify with the female gender, or women who prefer female sexual partners. Bandō writes for women seeking to empower themselves as female, feminine company employees and members of society. She seems to support the discourse of “cultural feminism, where feminine virtues need to be valued to counter masculine rules” (Yamada 2009, 2).

We see how the AnAn OL reader is worried about her status as a ‘woman’ in Japanese society, and gender becomes intricately linked to the discipline of the OL body and a way to shape her female body. The female body is something to be socially controlled and disciplined through the use of fabrics and materials. According to the advice in AnAn, the female body needs to be controlled, because without shaping garments and other materials that decorate and further attribute ‘femininity’ to the female body, the body is unfeminine. Goods, products, and exercises
are critical to taking care of the body and enhancing femininity. The act of disciplining and controlling is feminine, and without following AnAn’s advice, the OL body, image, and gendered identity is at risk for gender confusion.

Consumption as either OL indulgence or necessity

AnAn and Bandō both promote internationalization and the exploration of or in least an expressed interest in foreign goods and culture. As explained in Chapter Two, Bandō avidly promotes and encourages women to travel, learn language, and observe the dignified graces (posture, comportment) of other women. Traveling and experiencing the ‘foreign’ enhances an OLs femininity and makes her more cultured. Foreign travel for Japanese women is appealing because it is considered to be emotionally liberating from the anxieties and stress of normative (OL) life (McVeigh 1997, 83). This cosmopolitan awareness and international curiosity is a source of “refinement” and “sophistication” in Japanese women’s magazines where high-class consumable items are advertised (Rosenberger 1996, 25). The ability to purchase luxuries and goods is a sign of femininity and a way to establish oneself as a member of an elite social class.

The images shown in AnAn portray these consumer items in a manner that is attractive to the visual consumer and AnAn reader. Visuals in AnAn and other women’s magazines show women in leisure activities “displaying no concern whatsoever for providing men’s or elder’s relaxation [...] this] challenges the superiority of productive, hierarchal contexts over intimate, relaxed contexts” (Rosenberger 1996, 26). Rosenberger describes a shift that occurs for women between the ages of 25-35 (an older range of the OL demographic), and she explains that magazines provide an “escape,” albeit temporary, from the “tensions and power relations caused
by the emotional attachments of marriage and family” (27). She goes on to explain, “Resistance is complicated because the social images offered by women’s magazines are part of a system of tastes that women use to attain higher positions within society” (27). Therefore, OLs can improve their ‘standing’ and social mobility by acquiring and indulging in the ‘other’ realities that women’s magazines offer. Consumerism in *AnAn* is portrayed as an enjoyable indulgence that offers the OL a temporary escape. As Rosenberger (1996) explains, women have the “assimilated messages of freedom and individual choice into their lives that marriage, birth, and divorce trends” do not offer OLs (30). Ultimately, an OL is presented with two choices: either to start a business herself and maintain it with women of likeminded ambition, or move abroad and continue a career elsewhere where the traditional values of Japanese culture are not as confining.

*AnAn* displays fashions and the costs of these fashions without relying on verbal (textual) pressures to enforce a kind of feminine appearance. Bandō, however, explicitly advises women of the importance of being a “good customer” and “wearing high-quality base garments, shoes, and accessories” (Bandō 2008, 82,63). Bandō’s form of consumerism is grounded in an elitist sentiment where value of goods is determined by the price. Although she advises against solely buying luxury items, her emphasis is less about finding articles that one really likes and more about finding articles that are imbued with social class and worthy of others’ attention and admiration. Clammer explains how consumerism in Japanese women’s culture is a unique form of bonding that creates a sense of belonging: “consuming the same things as everybody else reinforces this sense of belonging” (“Theorizing” 1997, 168). If Bandō promulgates the idea that purchasing high-class items should be on every dignified OL’s agenda, then she excludes a vast range of OLs with different economic and financial circumstances. Essentially, Bandō’s consumerism is exclusive while *AnAn’s* advised means of consumerism is inclusive and holds
the potential to foster a sense of community and common ground for all OLs, despite their financial situations.

*AnAn* advises women and produces women as consumers who indulge in the visual pleasures of the images presented in the magazine. Images allow women, as female visual consumers, to interpret the material in a multitude of ways: every woman’s interpretation is personal and may vary significantly from another woman’s interpretation. In the realm of cultural studies, Janice Winship claims that women “recognize and relish the vocabulary of dreams” and can “vicariously indulge […] in the fictions they create” (cited in Storey 2003, 97). In this way, we can interpret the paucity of career-focused images in *AnAn* or the lack of ‘real’ women’s concerns in Bandō’s book as a way for women readers to interpret what is available for reading or viewing in a way that is personally gratifying and for their leisure.

**Women’s ‘Voice’ and Ways of Conveying Information**

The advice in Bandō’s book and *AnAn* is written by women for women. It is exactly this kind of creation/production of women’s ‘word’ that can be read and interpreted differently by Japan’s OLs. As explained in Chapter Two, Bandō emphasizes a woman’s intuition as a valued tool for OL success in the workplace. In other words, a woman must listen to her intuition, and this will tell her what others need and how to respond appropriately. Lebra (2007) explains that women have a “sharp awareness of the discrepancy between the woman’s own wishes and her assumption of what is expected of her by others, particularly, by men” (151). Bandō’s ‘feminine intuition’ is a kind of ‘female’ response to male desires and needs, in the workplace; it maintains a sense of the mother-as-nurturant kind of expectation. Essentially, OLs cannot escape their
socially inscribed roles as ‘mothers’ or as society’s (male) ‘nurturants’ in the workplace and in the home.

Conversely, the female ‘voice’ in *AnAn* is about listening to women’s voices, their contributions to the magazine, as central to the process of creating advice that addresses OL readers’ issues. It seems that OL readers’ anxieties and desires always concern the (OL) body in some form or another, whether it be questions about sexuality, shopping as a way to decorate/prepare the body, or beauty/health. The commonality between these three possible categories of *AnAn* advice is the implicit intensity and focus on one’s *personal* body and individual gratification. The *AnAn* OL reader may desire advice that will teach her how to snatch the man of her dreams, how to find sexual gratification (for herself and for her partner) as we’ve seen in the Matsumoto Jun image in Chapter Three. Or, the *AnAn* reader may seek advice about the latest technologies that might help her lose weight at home or safely depilate unwanted hair. In this way, Japanese women’s magazines focus on the “individual’s fulfillment” and an “unlimited freedom of consumer choice” (Assmann 2003, 2-3). Moreover, these magazines “convey ideas on how to play with different selves and personalities […]the OL] is able to choose from a menu of possible combinations” (7). *AnAn* allows the OL to re-invent herself, to desire without judgment and even escape; it presents a myriad of possibilities for enjoyment, relaxation, and leisure.

I assert that *AnAn* creates a unique bond with the reader, as it functions as a forum for escape, female companionship, and solace. The magazine often posts questionnaires and asks women to answer their inquiries, to give the *AnAn* reader the chance to input her own experiences or opinions. In this way, OL ‘voices’ are concretely manifested and eternalized in black and white print form. If OLs cannot express their opinions in a Japanese company/society
that values and expects OL ‘management of emotions’ (as explained in Chapter Two), then *AnAn* qualifies as a constructive space for women to ‘speak.’ OL input is valued and encouraged. Despite the fact that her contribution to the magazine may not involve corporate quandaries, she is concerned and consumed with the idea of ‘secretly’ finding and attaining personal satisfaction and gratification. Therefore, *AnAn* provides a strong connection to “jibunrashisa” (自分らしさ), the process of discovering and becoming oneself. As Rosenberger (1996) explains:

> Freedom and individuality (rather than individualism) are possible, but acceptable only in relaxed context with intimates where one’s heart finds expression. The self-oriented images of freedom and individuality found in women’s magazines may cause dissension if women expand and assimilate them into various arenas of their lives, so that their heart-felt desires guide activities that present alternatives to, even penetrate into, home and work responsibilities. (24)

*AnAn* functions under Rosenberger’s definition as a “relaxed content with intimates,” a unique women’s forum where OL voices are submitted, recorded, and responded to. Moreover, as Imamura explains, women cannot openly assert their desires in society, as that would put them socially at risk for being labeled selfish. Women must maintain the guise of women who ‘want for nothing’ so as not to disrupt corporate and social harmony.

**Concluding Analysis: Interpreting the success of each advice literature**

Bandō’s advice for her readers is not to challenge existing norms and expectations of women but rather comply to them with grace and dignity. Her advice arches back to Confucianism, and she advises that women should follow her advice and learn how to operate
within the parameters that have been inscribed by society specifically by men within Japanese society. Her advice, unlike that of AnAn, is not participatory; it filters out other women’s voices except Bandō’s and cannot adjust to the situation of every OL, perhaps not even the vast majority of OLs who might be in similar, stressful situations. Therefore, it is appropriate to ask the question, is Bandō’s dignified OL ideal even achievable, or in the least even a realistic model? Is this ideal what OL women really want, or is it just one woman’s success story? Takie Lebra (2007) explains:

Women themselves seem to feel ambivalent: no single option appears totally satisfactory, but each in part seems to offer something irresistible. A dimorphic housewife, generally content, may sometimes wish for the challenge of a bimorphic experience and feel envious of the freedom enjoyed by the amorphic woman. Conversely, a woman who takes pride in her independence from domestic obligations and detachment from heterosexual entanglements may sometimes wish for a ‘typically feminine’ way of life, and perhaps even bind herself to the role of wife and mother. (151)

Although I discuss Lebra’s categories of dimorphism and bimorphism in Chapter Three, the last part of Lebra’s description seems to most readily describe Bandō. True, Bandō finds gratification and fulfillment in her professional life, her “independence from domestic obligations,” so might she be in fact acting as the amorphic woman Lebra describes? Bandō seems entirely preoccupied with femininity, and perhaps the keyword dignity in her book could be supplanted with the term ‘femininity.’ Her advice for women to empower themselves by predicting the needs of others and maintaining the harmony of the environment appears to mimic Lebra’s description of the responsibilities and expectations of Japan’s “wife and mother.”
Moreover, Bandō writes as an authority figure but we can ask the question to whom she is asserting her authority towards. As she explains in her preface, all women’s lives have the potential to become enriched with dignity. Perhaps Bandō writes less for the mass of OLs and more for herself—she implicitly toots her own horn about her hard work and achievements. Indeed, she conveys her advice to female readers like a concerned mother-type figure or gal pal, yet she is really one of the few woman who ‘made it’ in this rare trajectory of life for an OL in Japan. Bandō creates her own rules on how to achieve dignity, and her standards seem to create an OL archetype that may not be achievable. She seems to bypass not only the fact that her readers may not be willing to make the same sacrifices as herself for the sake of their careers, but also the fact that only a small percentage of well-educated, socially elite women will ever reach positions of authority in government and in Japanese companies. Her ideal of the dignified OL seems to be a well-defined yet unrealistic manifestation of a real woman who succeeds in all aspects of her life. Bandō’s dignified woman has too many responsibilities—she must successfully play the role of the mother-nurturer in the home and in the company, she must bestow dignity upon others and teach her bosses, choose the right (marital) partner, and ultimately be a good global citizen. Not following Bandō’s advice suggests a failure not only as an OL but as a woman who fails to assert her femininity. Bandō is about perpetuating norms and not breaking rules. She is not about writing for social change, although she states that women who cultivate themselves to have grace and dignity hold the potential for change.

Bandō’s advice is perhaps biased. She promotes the values of a private women’s university (Showa Women’s University), yet perhaps she fears that the inclusion of information in her book about her current position as “sensei” and president of a woman’s university might cloud the reader (the OL’s) ability to judge her advice as authoritative and unquestionable.
Alternatively, *AnAn*’s advice, because it is a collaborative women’s effort can be challenged, accepted, or rejected indiscriminately. Bandō serves as president of Showa Women’s University, (a private women’s institution, no less), so perhaps her advice can be construed as biased in promoting the “value” of attaining high social status through education, particularly a private (women’s) education. She is ‘selling’ the benefit of an education with the expectation that it might ‘pay off’ (bigger OL salaries through promotions) and strengthen the OL image. She does not suggest that obtaining higher education is a good thing for the OL as a *person*. McVeigh (1997) explains the significance and correlation between management and money-making businesses at Japanese women’s colleges, as he states that “education [is] part of a purely economic process” (94).

*AnAn*, on the other hand, works as a framework constructed by women for women. *AnAn*’s advice is constantly changing and being ‘updated,’ which suggests OLs as *readers* are shaping the advice that is being created and promulgated in the magazine. Undoubtedly, Japanese women still feel the pressure of their culture to mold them into ideals that comply with social norms and the image of the female body taking on the feminine role of the mother, the wife, and the consumer. *AnAn* appeals to Japanese OLs’ need to redefine their view of success. Success can be seen be still linked to traditional values (like housekeeping, childrearing, and being a good wife) but also for some women, the need to find personal fulfillment. As one Japanese female interviewee explains:

> The woman who fulfills her life, does what she wants to do, pursues her own interests—and at the same time brings up her children well [...] Success depends on each person’s desires [...] I think that for women if they really want to be independent, then marriage will interfere and they will not be successful in their own minds (quoted in Dilatush
1976, 205-6).

Perhaps this is why the trend exists for OLs who desire to break out of the traditional Japanese stereotype of mother and wife and choose to emigrate to other countries to pursue careers. These women can neither be seen nor accepted as successful within the strictly defined parameters of Japanese society, and this view of Japanese society is so entrenched and unchanging. As Dilatush elucidates, in Japan there is the “strong cultural tradition that for a woman her home and family must come first and are her responsibility” (1976, 197). This ‘tradition’ has not entirely changed since the late 70s, and there does not seem to be any hope that a Japanese man will shoulder any of the burdens of taking care of the home and childrearing. AnAn is the more successful advice because it provides OLs the opportunity for their voices, desires, and anxieties to be heard.
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A pair of black, low-heeled shoes completes the genkan each evening at precisely six thirty. “Tadaima,” Harumi calls out to Okaasan, as she slides and locks the front door, the bell of her house key charm jingling. Harumi makes her way down the hallway to the bathroom to quickly wash her hands before sitting down with the rest of us for the evening family meal. Dinner conversation among Otōsan, Okaasan, and I usually includes talk of sports, the news, the weather, and what each of us predicts will happen on the next episode of the soap opera we watch every Wednesday evening. Perhaps tired from a long day at work, Harumi is quiet as usual.

Dinner comes to a close around 7:30 pm, and Harumi says, “Gochisōsamadeshita,” politely excuses herself, and washes her own dishes and chopsticks. She then briskly climbs the steep stairs and slides the door to her room. I won’t see her again until six am the next morning, when we all sit down again to eat breakfast before Harumi leaves for the office and I leave for school.

The memories of our prompt 6:45 evening dinners are just as vivid as they were nearly one year ago. I can remember many times when my host mother and I sat leisurely drinking tea after dinner, while Otōsan watched baseball in the adjacent room lying down on the tatami mat. During these occasions, Okaasan often confided in me her anxieties and concerns about Harumi, and she would sometimes express her concerns while carefully packing a lunchbox for Harumi to take to work the next day. Okaasan worried that Harumi would be lonely taking care of the house when her and Otōsan passed away, and she worried how Harumi would fare for the five days in December when her and Otōsan would be taking their annual spa trip. Okaasan wanted Harumi to marry, she said, so that Harumi wouldn’t be so lonely.

Harumi works in the student affairs office at Dōshisha University in Kyōto, performing the clerical work expected of her as an OL. Even though Harumi and I never had conversations about her lifestyle, there were some things that were perceptible through my observations alone. For example, Harumi appeared to compartmentalize her life very effectively. The family rarely heard tales of lighthearted office gossip or shared events between Harumi and her co-workers. This made me question whether Harumi really was lonely or just introverted, uncomfortable disclosing the details of her day. Harumi never complained about her work environment. She appeared to have a quiet, stoic resolve of a well-disciplined OL, a dignified tenacity that Bandō herself would most likely commend. Comparing Harumi as an OL with other OLs that I have read about and explored in this thesis—those who may be eager to leave their clerical work positions and move into their new roles as wives and mothers—made me realize that stereotyping the OL life trajectory and projecting either happiness or discontent onto the OL is entirely unjustified.

Harumi had the opportunity to escape this lifestyle by moving to the United States with her younger sister, but assumedly she chose not to. I still wonder whether she considers herself obligated to stay with her parents and care for them as they age or whether she willingly remains...
in her role as OL, and living at home, for other reasons. Does Harumi have a life outside the
office and outside the home that myself, Otōsan, and Okaasan re not privy to? Perhaps she lives
a full and robust life that she simply chooses not to disclose. I wish that I would have had more
time to explore these questions with Harumi, but between her work schedule and my schooling,
and her introversion, there simply was not such an opportunity. Upon my return to the United
States, I realized that my homestay experience intrigued me in more ways that I had previously
realized, and I wondered about the women of Japan who choose to remain OLs.

Harumi is an OL. A forty-two year old, perpetual OL.